"TAINTED" MOVES:

Subjects of Contemporary Travel Literatures.

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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.

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ABSTRACT.

The research for my thesis falls within the relatively fresh field of travel writing literary criticism, an area of increasing interest as growing global trends of tourism, migration, exile and "nomadic" movements of people displace the models of habitation and identity central to many traditions of literature. Principally, I seek to address three major questions through this study: to search for what the specific subjects of travel are; to examine how they are constructed; and to discuss their significance in the contemporary context most relevant to each.

Recently, the field of travel writing has become an increasingly important focal point for a range of competing and interconnected disciplines. Why have the directions of those questioning converged on what many still consider to be a rather second-rate, middle-brow class within literature? One answer is that travel writings are now considered a rich source for analysing key aspects of the representation of the world. A critical consideration of the various "modes" of travel writing reveals this discursive site as a vibrant arena for ideological interpolation, where neo-imperial interests and tastes are juxtaposed, complicated and challenged in divergent fields of "postcoloniality".

This thesis looks at both theory and practice, responding to a selection of postmodern and cultural critical sources and primary literary texts, chiefly of the writings of Paul Theroux, Oliver Sacks and Jonathan Raban, Bruce Chatwin, Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, and Michael Ondaatje. My aim is to construct a framework of critical practice, using these texts, that attempts to explain the function and place of different strands of contemporary travel writing within literary, geographical, historical, and cultural contexts. I pay particular attention to the array of narrative styles and impulses available (noting the receptive biases of realistic, "ethnographic" writing and imaginative fictional journeys and intentional differences that are propelled by the various types of displacement) in order to deconstruct the

processes of ideology at work in the production and reception of texts from different (and sometimes shifting) political locations.

I seek to unravel some of the differentiated functions and places of contemporary travel writing within historically and culturally "tainted" contexts, in the Pacific, Australia, the Middle East and on an international scale, in terms of key narrative and representational traits, in order to postulate the political and cultural capital garnered from this popular form of writing. Hence, I have linked particular "modes" of displacement with key texts in order to re-examine the effective meaning of terminologies of displacement, and to effectively analyze traits of cultural imperialism embedded in new narrative practices of the tourist, nomad, exile and migrant. In addition, my focus addresses specific contemporary contexts that converge with the representation of both displacement and placement, including interventions into postcolonial and globalisation studies, the history of subjectivity, and literary studies to develop key thematic connections with concerns such as subjectivity, the relationship of globalisation to "home" and the correlating subjects of exile, diaspora, migration, dislocation and alienation.

INTRODUCTION.

Settings Out: Introducing the Contemporary Proliferation of Travelling Subjects.

> It presently came into my head, that we might now by the Law of Arms take as many Prisoners as we would, and make them travel with us, and carry our Baggage.... Accordingly we secured about 60 lusty young Fellows, and let them know they must go with us; which they seemed very willing to do. (Defoe 54).

> One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself, / And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or ten million years, / I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait. / My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite, / I laugh at what you call dissolution, / And I know the amplitude of time. (Whitman 42).

> Travel must be adventurous. "The great affair is to move," wrote Robert Louis Stevenson in *Travels with a Donkey,* "to feel the needs and hitches of life more clearly; to come down off this feather bed of civilisation, and find the globe granite underfoot, and strewn with cutting flints." The bumps are vital. They keep the adrenalin pumping round. (Chatwin *Anatomy* 102).

> A map can tell me how to find a place I have not seen but have often imagined. When I get there, following the map faithfully, the place is not the place of my imagination. Maps, growing ever more real, are much less true. (Jeanette Winterson qtd. in Chambers 16).

Displacements of people are both as old and new as the human race itself. Movement is inextricably present in human settlement and unsettlement, cultural exchange and imposition, represented in a mobility of subjects which influences the relationships between individual people and cultures. However, in order to assess such a variety of subjectivities, an examination of cultures' textualising tendencies is helpful: focussing on how the important "subjects" of displacement are signalled, articulated and performed through the cultural productions of displacement. As Judith Butler notes, the performance or representations of a subject largely construct it; performances may be revelatory or distorted in manner, and either pre-scripted by a normative conception of the subject or approached as a means of displacing prior subjective constructions (Butler 341-44). One component of this performative operation as applied to travel texts is the exhaustive catalogue of terms available as labels for "different" types or styles of displacement, subjective "roles" and available narrative forms, which also demonstrates the common recognition of the prioritising of differentiated histories and places. Anthropologist and cultural theorist, James Clifford, conceives travel as a useful "term of cultural comparison precisely because of its historical taintedness, its associations with gendered, racial bodies, class privilege, specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers, documents and the like" (Clifford *Routes* 39). A consideration of "travel" leads naturally to an examination of the representation of "travellers", and the differing treatments and conditions apparent amongst the subjects of travel.

In this thesis I am primarily concerned with these changes in the performing of subjects and subjects performed in contemporary literatures of displacement and in critical studies concerned with these literatures, and tracking the sources that "taint"

these performances. Principally, I seek to address three major questions through this study: to search for what the specific subjects of travel are; to examine how they are constructed; and to discuss their significance in the contemporary context most relevant to each. Certainly, the relevance of this field of inquiry, at this time, strikes me as increasingly appropriate and important. The recent "double explosion" of readership in popular and academic contexts indicates radical shifts in the practice of writing on "moving subjects", and in the critical analyses of this production (Duncan and Gregory 1-2). A critical consideration of the various "modes" of travel writing reveals this discursive site as a vibrant arena for ideological interpolation, where neo-imperial interests and tastes are juxtaposed, complicated and challenged in divergent fields of "postcoloniality". If travel-writing has traditionally "helped produce the rest of the world for Western consumption", the boom in late twentieth and early twenty-first century displacement narratives appears at once to accelerate this process and also problematically to incorporate a growing recognition of cultural self-assertion by non-Western subjects (Huggan *Postcolonial Exotic* i). Accordingly, in this thesis I look closely at both the theory and practice of displacement in relation to a selection of primary texts and critical sources that represent some of the contradictory positions notable in current conceptions of "Globalisation." Accounts which take into consideration the contemporary literature's Globalising conditions must acknowledge the key emergence of displacement texts which fit into a schema of new cultural imperialism, constitute positions in opposition to this, or occupy some kinds of hybrid position in between. In seeking to unravel the differentiated functions and places of contemporary travel writing within historically and culturally "tainted" contexts, and to postulate the political and cultural capital to be garnered from this popular form of writing, I have linked particular "modes" of displacement with key texts in order to

re-examine the effective meaning of terminologies of displacement, and to effectively critique traits of cultural imperialism embedded in new narrative practices.

The renewed, critical focus on older texts along with a surge in writerly claimants to "new" styles has led to an invigoration and unsettlement of previously performed travelling subject-positions. This can be quickly communicated through a look at the epigraphs above, which I will use to expand on some areas of query I have indicated above, and which clearly demonstrate a discontinuity of subjective treatment, despite a similar desire for aesthetic containment. These epigraphs may be considered a sketch of a "traditional" desire for a univocal and monological voice within travel narrative: a desire which is, in terms of a contemporary, theoretical perspective, not easily attained or maintained. Of course the form of this desire, its epistemological expression, and the specific contexts in which it occurs, historically and culturally, differ a good deal, but an assessment reveals a number of connections and continuities in concern. Travel writing may be historically "tainted" in its specificities, but emphatically, it has a historical structure of interconnectedness crucial to its availability for criticism.

First, Defoe's attempt to assume power by force and an interconnected assumption of cultural authority (comfortable with both "securing" and knowing the minds of his 60 "lusty" young Africans) narrates a historically-enforced relationship between the Western writing subject and those subjugated by its authority. His position, as an author complicit with the hegemonic spread of Western "Enlightenment" values, represents a classic stage in the growth of an attempted narrative assumption of power over travelled zones. Of course, Defoe cannot thoroughly gloss over the multiple subjects apparent in the situation, including possibilities concerned with historical exchange and the relative positions of narrator

and narrated. Through his style of "monadic" representation, he asserts a claim that reflects both egocentric and Eurocentric mastery of subject matter: an idealised reflection that cannot wholly exclude the other subjects from the frame, however much Defoe attempts to speak for them. This variety of high imperial travel writing is pivotal in the sense that it is active in the cultural construction of the empire, and the imperial "home" defined against this, through the attempted "othering" of cultural differentiation.

In what is apparently a quite dissimilar context, the excerpt from Whitman's "Song of Myself" may recall a different historical moment and geography, yet the expansion of a solipsistic ego over multiple boundaries of time and space exhibits a projection of certainty and containment onto the representation of travel comparable to that of Defoe. Nationalistically American, romantic and considerably later in time than Defoe, Whitman's composite, free-ranging ego may seem to contain a pluralistic element (perhaps a reflection of Revolutionary America's E pluribus Unum), yet the mediation of the romantic artist at work again attempts to channel disparate material through the representative, all-encompassing narrator. As such, Whitman's project also mirrors the culturally-defining function of Defoe's travelogue. In his case, though, Whitman formulates the national characteristics of the United States from multiple sources that are only integrated in the narrator's assumption of self-as-nation.

Continuing a quick, pan-historic review of similarities, the epigrammatic assertion of Chatwin reveals a modernist aesthetic at work, emphasizing the access to a redemptive reality beyond the constraints of "civilisation", and doing so via a re-appropriation of the Victorian encounter with a more "primitive" relation to the world. In quoting a predecessor-model, Robert Louis Stevenson, he formulates an individual, "heroic" mode of travel which, although attractive, somewhat ignores the

history of unequal exchange and agency that such a "naturalistic" relationship is dependent upon. In an important way, "Civilisation" funds his travel, in economic terms, and I spend some time in my second chapter addressing questions about the establishment of Chatwin as an elitist nomad: about whether his feet really do touch the ground of the real social situation that he ambles through, the place of "home" within his writing, and his assumption of an assenting, and therefore demographically similar, audience.

All in all, these authors share several traits characteristic of cultural imperialism present on many levels of their work, but most readily apparent in the assumption of a containing, monological control of the subjects of their writing. However, such a process of cultural "mapping" cannot fully suppress the myriad subjects that shift under this kind of template. Winterson's postmodernist refocusing (with the replacement of the actual location with the illusory "reality" of the map), may seem to highlight a distinct change in awareness towards a more "unfixed" and multiple subjectivity, yet even here, her comments are mediated through the presentation of personal experience. Such a focus begs the question: what use is a map that no longer provides stable reference, and perhaps, why were we so trusting in the first place? Following Jeanette Winterson's indication, despite any amount of added detail, old "maps" cannot be trusted to provide a singular, subjectively accurate history of place, or, for that matter, history of displacement, yet the production of subjectivity is still apparent.

Just why are the old "maps" no longer reliable? Among my chief concerns in this study, I include an inquiry into the changing contemporary conceptions of representation and subjectivity that challenge the monological or "monadic" depiction of displacement, by examining recent exemplary texts and theories relevant to

displacement, and to suggest some possibilities for (re)defining travelling subjects at the end of the twentieth-century and beginning of the twenty-first. In order to achieve this goal, I examine "primary texts" that hail from diverse geographic and historical sites (although written within a few years of each other), and the theoretical and critical approach reflects a similarly apt heterogeneous sampling, pursuing a number of different methodological approaches and selecting an effective range of "tools" from various research disciplines to form a "toolbox" of critical theory.[1] This is necessary because, in order to pursue aspects of such a diverse field to productive ends, the significant terms of assessment need to be multiple and subject to a comparative, interdisciplinary treatment. To put this another way, the act of showing the interconnected and multiple subjectivities at work in the cultural representation of displacement requires a fittingly broad critical approach. Although particular chapters are modelled more emphatically on some fields of critical reference over others, the whole thesis demonstrates this interconnected theoretical approach, seeking to place textual analysis into a rich conceptual context.

The point of, and even need for, such an approach becomes apparent as the conditions for cultural production and consumption are brought into focus. No cultural "texts" are produced in a vacuum, and an awareness of their position and the treatment of their subjects can only be more fully realised by taking into account the social relation systems on which they are dependent (Johnson 11). As Pierre Bourdieu suggests,

> it can only be an unjustifiable abstraction (which could fairly be called reductive) to seek the source of the understanding of cultural productions in these productions themselves, taken in isolation and divorced from the conditions of their production and utilisation.... Scientific analysis must work to relate to each other two sets of relations,

[1] After the Foucauldian model, as alluded to in the introduction of Deleuze and Guattari.

> the space of the works or discourses taken as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them. (Homo Academicus xvii).

A strictly formalist approach to the renewed populism and stylistics of "travelling texts" would ignore the contexts that have been constitutive for its resurgence (Eagleton 3). Current debate in the field tends to centre on generally historicist and comparative concerns (cultural and ideological). Under the influence of differentiated, but interconnected, strains of critical theory, aesthetics and affects, and the shift in understanding of relations between cultures that has resulted from decolonisation and accelerated globalisation, contemporary travel writing demands recognition as a multi-vocal medium that effects a constant reconstitution of narrative subjectivity. As Mary Louise Pratt notes, even at the height of imperial or colonial power, the presentation of subjective control is of an imposed, fragile order, faced with a number of resistances, and is really a conglomerate strategy, incomplete in its application (39). However, the historical claim to a "monadic" and monological subjectivity in writings-of-displacement, fairly tenuous in retrospect, is even harder to claim when examining recent texts. Instead, such a claim must be seen as largely inconsistent with contemporary writings.

Through the texts and theory studied in this thesis, I demonstrate the development of subjective strategies that fragment the "monologic" claim with their contingent dependence upon increasingly unstable factors; I also demonstrate the current models of exchange where other subjectivities have become exemplars. I argue that, as postmodern subjects, the author-travellers are prone to a doubled instability of identity due to the narrative displacement of the modern "self": an absence which is filled by substituting and shifting subjectivities instead of a single discrete, unified consciousness. The flux affecting the position of the author is

symptomatic of this displacement from a final, authorial control, and a suspicion that the subject written about is becoming the subject writing. Following the work of materialist, poststructuralist, feminist and "postcolonial" theorists (including Jameson, Barthes, Derrida, Eakin, Foucault, Judith Butler, Deleuze and Guattari), identifying notions of self and subject have come to be widely regarded as contingent, composite and unstable. As much as displacement narratives have been seemingly pressed to reveal autobiographical details in authorial experience and interpretation, postmodern aesthetics highlight a countering "unsettlement" typified in a travelling vision: the losing of the self to the transitional ambivalence implicit in "the magico-religious act of border-crossing" (Musgrove 38). Personal identity is thus doubly problematic in the case of a travelling subject, facing material "deterritorialisation" coupled with a crisis of ownership over one's narrative. Yet instead of the extreme fixation on the Deleuzian notion of always "becoming" in much poststructural criticism (and hence on the absence of any clear subject positioning), this thesis also seeks to fill in the contextual features that still act, cumulatively, to significantly "place" moving subjects.

Subject-Appropriate Methodologies.

In recent years, the field of travel writing has become an increasingly important focal point for a range of competing and interconnected disciplines. Why have the directions of those critics questioning converged on what many still consider to be a rather second-rate, middle-brow class within literature? One answer is that travel writings are now considered a rich source for analysing key aspects of the representation of the world. At the point of writing, this coupling of movement and writing is becoming increasingly significant to a wide range of theorists who are

setting out questions in the field to do with the cultural relativism at work in producing the subjects of travel. Beyond the group of critical theorists mentioned above, the discursive strategies of my thesis can be connected, genealogically, to the work of Edward Said, James Clifford, Mary Louise Pratt and Caren Kaplan, who are important ground-breakers in travel writing criticism. My own interests in the field are prompted by some of the activity of these figures, and I seek to add my own questions through this study. My own focus addresses specific contemporary contexts that converge with the representation of both displacement and placement, including interventions into postcolonial and globalisation studies, the history of subjectivity, and literary studies to develop key thematic connections and disjunctures between my selected texts. I have chosen the texts to address the continuities and discontinuities in the treatment of major themes, like subjectivity, globalisation, "home" and the correlating subjects of exile, diaspora, migration, dislocation and alienation.

Methodologically, I contend the appropriateness of studying writing on the move by means of my own movement through these different and shifting domains of recent critical and cultural theory. The interdisciplinary area of "Cultural Studies," as a catchment for many interconnected disciplines and subject foci, lends itself to such a study, in terms of historically, socially, and *critically* placing the praxis of travel writing. Following the lead of Said's influential "Travelling Theory" (*Exile* 436-52), my practice of "sampling" disciplines to elucidate travel texts reflects a desire to emulate the energy and development of critical theory that has paralleled the production of literary texts. As such, my analyses will be seen themselves as a travelling criticism, a criticism of theoretical development through appropriately specified times and places, and always interconnected with these two, an attempt to

contextualise the literary production of movement and cultural meeting present in the subjects of the primary texts.

I also follow another leading guide through contemporary cultural theory, Fredric Jameson, who asserts the importance of historical context:

> "Always historicize!"... But as the traditional dialectic teaches us, the historicizing operation can follow two distinct paths:... the path of the object and the path of the subject, the historical origins of the things themselves and that more intangible historicity of the concepts and categories by which we attempt to understand those things. (Jameson *Political Unconsciousness* ix).

If, in my multidisciplinary approach to analysing travel writing, my aim is to "open up" its significance by contextualising the "utterance" of key texts, then the selection of particular methodological structures signals this intention through double movements of close analysis and comparative exegesis, and both diachronic and synchronic readings of historical significance. To this end, textual close-reading is intrinsic to my practice, but this is always informed and shaped by referring to an overarching critical awareness of historicist concerns. The historical "placement" of travelling subjects relies heavily on a specific history of methodological and critical practice developed and developing, matching the subjective movement within travel writing itself, as I have already demonstrated with the examples that opened this introduction. Yet, as my focus is also largely on contemporary production of travel texts from different spatial sites, I am also assessing a synchronic and synthetic awareness of history. The research aims of the thesis rely on a synthesis and comparison of several historically and epistemologically distinct models of critical theory, and so, in seeking to go beyond the immediate analysis, I emphasize a "metahistorical" tendency, linking the processes, the genealogy, of writings on travel.

Yet, whereas the processes and production of writing on the move must be seen as fitting into and as defined by the narrative structures and contexts complicit in a shared history of narrative production, the specific utterances (and the values accorded to them in reception, for that matter) are always contingent upon the specifics of social and historical conditions, of both the authors and their subjects of writing, and I take care to also emphasize the plurality of *histories* and historiography of displacement literature in my analysis. Consequently, where the subjects of travel diverge, examination reveals different narrative traditions at work in the formation of those subjects and the attitudes and relations moulded to the travelled environment and experience. Thus, in the thesis, the positioning of history in writings about the Pacific or the Middle East, for instance, will seek to indicate points of comparison and important difference in its constructions as a subject. This will be made in terms of placement within discursive traditions, the relative positioning of the authors as subsidiary subjects, and connections and distinctions to be made in the value of historical advocacy.

Alongside and also contingent upon general historicist concerns, I will also examine the specific moments and contexts of discursive subjects in terms of shifts in literary theory and practice. A key area of focus will be to question the "oppositional" strategies of modernism and postmodernism, drawing attention to the exemplary subjects of each. Connected to this will be a further consideration of "postcolonial" literary subjects and concerns, and how they relate to other "literary" representational histories within the texts, and with the specific contemporary contexts that impinge upon these relationships. The key "types" of travel text that I have selected for this study are aimed towards a commentary on the significance of displaced subjects in contemporary ideology. My historicizing sampling of travel writing therefore draws

attention to the development of archetypal narrative templates to discuss their impact on the contemporary writings that exist in their wake. The critical interpretations of displacement are crucial to understanding the current reassessments of place and history in a world that increasingly seems populated by travellers, and fights over the definition of globalised ideologies. As much as they can be discussed as a group, and regarded as sharing characteristics in common, the negotiation of subjectivity exists as key defining concern within contemporary narratives of displacement.

"Worldly" Subjects: contextual Concerns.

Throughout the thesis, I will assert the differentiated and uneven travel experiences and representations available to different groups and individuals. The focus of individual chapters articulates how I look at particular territories, and *subjects*, of interest. The critical movement I make, through the thesis, will match that of a physical journey, starting from "home" and moving away to wider contexts. In my assessment of the interplay of subjectivities based on the relationship of regions, (for instance, the Pacific, Australia, the Middle-East and South Asia in connection with Europe and North America), I will try to avoid the danger of too generalized or totalising theoretical approaches by returning to historical materialist methodology. Similarly, I examine how a range of contemporary cultural producers (authors, critics, journalists, film-makers, musicians and theorists), their travel practices and modes of representation, engage with and complicate the concepts of "insider" and "outsider" status, the notion of home, the relationship between gender, class and travel, (and consequent shifts in travelling "taste" and "affect"). Within this examination, I will look for the notable differences in intention, methodology, content and impact.

At Home Ranging: Gendered Travels.

In terms of gender, I look at the implications of a continuing tendency towards a masculinist assumption of subjectivity in authorship (and readership) present in many types of travel writing. My selection of primary writing subjects may seem biased; the major literary texts I discuss are all "penned" by male authors. However, I suggest this selection reflects an existing bias in the field whose implications on gender representation I examine. Contemporary travel-writing undoubtedly conforms to some aspects of gender-specific stereotypical behaviour. Even when women are the subjects writing, the characteristic treatment is often rendered "masculine" through the conventional narrative forms used and the allocation of a traditionally domestic norm that female authorship and travel practice often concedes to. As in so many traditionally "masculine" spheres, despite inroads in the numbers of female participants as subjects in this area, women writers continue to face an additional displacement into the role of a "masculinised" subject. As Clark relates, "[t]he heroic qualities of the traveller – resilience, physical courage, intrepidity – would also seem to categorise the figure as implicitly male" (18). In this attitude, he follows Lawrence, who observes, "to varying degrees, all the studies of adventure and travel... encode the traveller as a male who crosses boundaries and penetrates spaces; the female is mapped as a place on the itinerary of the male journey" (2).

When a woman travels, then, the differences between a "feminine" practice and the traditional assumption of masculine perspective and subjectivity make for a discomforting decision to be made in terms of male reception: to place her in strong shoes and sensible trousers, or to perceive her as someone just moving through on the way to another "home"? Hence, an assertive, female traveller, like Mary Wollstonecraft, travelling with daughter in tow, contradicts a perceived primary

assumption of a genre "founded upon an almost irresistible imperative to abandon home, wife and children" (Clark 20). Although, with an increasing proportion of female authors, this masculinist subjectivity may be challenged, it is notable that at present, as in the examples of famous female travel-writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the texts and experiences of travelling women are still commonly presented as masculinist (Turner 113-5), or exceptional, and subjected to a niche-marketing that exploits their "difference" in very limited terms. The success of some female authors in making their presence noted in a domain fairly conventionally exclusive to males, then, suggests to me both the exceptional character of these authors but also how limited a scope of deviation these exceptions often achieve: how easily they become trapped into a "sideshow" territory where they are defined and contained by their curious difference.

In spite of this "trap," I do suggest some notable exceptions to this tendency, especially when I look at travelling subjects that also infer a degree of habitation. I argue that the literary industry more commonly accommodates "female" experience within positions of exilic, migrant and diasporic subjectivity; however, the more greatly valorised position of "exile" is still often reserved for male membership, alongside the other restrictions (by class and ethnicity) that some critics further maintain. Furthermore, the other, more "natural" subject-positions for women within travel-writing characteristically include "domestications," including positioning as authors of denigrated, "ordinary" types of displacement (for instance, in the role of migrant mother, sister or wife), or as subjects *within* male narrative: subjected to the fulfilment of what the male author wants or chooses to see. I argue that the "historical taintedness" of gender relationships carries over into interconnected issues of social position and taste with the performance of travel texts.

Classy moves.

As prominently as gender considerations, I also emphasize the class relationships inherent in subjects constructed through travel narrative. The associated notions of taste, and the modelling of hierarchical systems of reference that stress the division of the world and specific societies into uneven economic zones, highlight the juncture of displacement criticism and wider social concerns. The various "types" of travelling subject and text will be assessed in terms of uneven cultural exchange. By focussing on the flux and increasing heterogenisation of narrative exchange present in the "postcoloniality" of travel writing, I also address the persistent counter-forces tending towards cultural dominance, homogenisation and the practice of commodification as a mechanism that constrains cultural and social difference. To this end, I focus on the contending identities and affiliations of different subject-positions, labelled "travelling", "touristic", "nomadic", "exilic", "diasporic" and "migrant", examining the various strategies of subjective affiliation at work in these definitions. The role of "home" as a politically and economically determining factor governing who can cross borders and who cannot, and in what manner such a crossing manifests itself, also requires attention. Within the fundamental differences between types of movement (tourism, exile, labour migration, and privileged migratory lifestyles) gender and class will be shown to play particularly instructive and restrictive roles.

Writing in the World.

At a time when an increasing number of claims about the conditions of "globalisation" are in circulation, the examination of subjective strategies in

literatures of displacement provide a testing ground for evaluating the currency of these various claims. The importance of this area of study is necessitated by a growing awareness of current global displacements of populations and cultures (caused, in part, by the forces of globalisation) and the need to raise into a more general consciousness the issues of displacement "affect" that accompany these movements. Indeed, many theorists posit displacement, and the cultural relativism attributable to it, as one of the principal concerns and conditions of postmodernity. Writings of displacement rewrite the world. A sense of transitory positions and motile interconnectedness are a central feature in contemporary social relations, not just of physical journeying itself, but of the imaginative and ideological shifts that are associated, by affect, with the movements and global-foreshortening technologies that typify the hegemonic spread of "late capitalism". As Jameson notes, one aspect of the "new" global culture is the perception of its programme of "export" based on an assumption of shared values and the standardisation of codes (Jameson *Globalisation* 56-7).

The expectations of homogenising globalisations, with many of the products and experiences of travel influenced by this drive to standardisation, is, however, not produced in experiences of displacement which are still highly differentiated. Even such a widespread phenomenon with plebeian associations as mass tourism is, in John Frow's analysis, dependent on "a relentless extension of commodity relations, and the consequent inequalities of power, between centre and periphery, First and Third World, developed and underdeveloped regions, metropolis and countryside" (Frow 151). Other modes of displacement, such as exile and diaspora, are even more clearly marked by a double cultural differentiation and separation from host culture and homeland. Literary criticism that focuses on this differentiated displacement is of

increasing relevance and remains mostly categorical in response to growing global trends of tourism, migration, exile, diasporic and nomadic movements of people.

However, these population movements are not just noted quantitatively but also qualitatively, skewing the centrality of habitation and identity present in many traditions of literature both by volume and *kinds* of displacement available to contemporary people, in ways which question the parameters of the traditional terminology of travel. Certainly, I will argue that writing which focuses on the "new" contact zones between cultures has become increasingly recognisable as a productive zone in its own right, capable of reflexively interrogating the assumptions of globalisation and its resistance. In the thesis, I will show that the site of contemporary travel writing is demonstrably multiaxial; it is available for reiteration or challenge, the artistic or ethnographic performance of encounter, but its very ontology is founded on the necessity of encounter itself. The recognition of any common conditions of displacement in this study hinges on the recognition that narratives of displacement reveal cultural imperialism and colonialism as ongoing and even increasingly important concerns amongst the "new" encounters of global cultural exchange.

The first chapter, which follows next, will pursue these areas of inquiry through an analysis of the cultural exchanges present in contemporary travel writing over the Pacific.

ONE.

Shifting Reflections: (re)Viewing Colonial Histories and Literary Tourism in the Contemporary Pacific.

Narcissus stares into the pool, and there discovers a face whose expression of wonder and yearning is a miraculously perfect match to his own.... The refractive property of water ensures that when we look in deep, we see shallow. When we gaze down, searching for some shadowy profundity below the surface, what usually comes back to us is merely *us*. (Raban 33).

There is a Third World within every First World, and vice versa.
(Trinh "Difference" 8).

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
In that grey vault. The sea. The sea
Has locked them up. The sea is history. (Walcott)

Travel writings about particular parts of the globe, its peoples and cultures, rely on entangled representations of history, place and travel practices that vary greatly depending on the relationship between the writer and the written-about. In accordance with the position of the writer, history can be a personal, genealogical account or an "objectified" discourse of contact and observation; place can be mapped as a chart that belittles the local through

> continual reference to the West, distorts through the imposed "realism" of gridlines, or magnifies the significance of marks inscribing bodies and practical knowledges of celestial, current and wave navigation. "Travel" is a term representing any number of different, and sometimes competing, practices and critiques, but this makes it useful in signalling the complexity of the various historically comparative movements of people, objects and concepts within and in between the various regions of the globe. In short, the representation of travel implicates the representation of cultural relativity, on a sliding scale between individual experiences to meta-societal contact.

In emphasizing this, I am reengaging with James Clifford's definition of travel (introduced earlier), highlighting "its historical taintedness" (*Routes* 39). Representing travel, or displacement, as some critics prefer (Kaplan 3), encompasses a range of practices and subjects originating from a diversity of locations, and typified by different terminology, and, I stress, quite different relative status to the subjects narrated. Throughout this thesis, I will be making comparisons between such practices, their divergent subjects and differing impacts and I suggest that some of these literary journeys are effective in recognising cultural difference and connection in the relationships constructed between the writing subjects and those written about. Indeed, Trinh T. Minh-ha's mutually reflected recognition of cultural equivalence, levelling the perception of regional hierarchy, encapsulated in the above epigraph, features as a positive form of the Globalising power of displacement theory. As the thesis progresses, part of my strategy will be to assess diverse practices styled as "nomadic," "exilic," "diasporic," and "migrant" in terms of empowering tactics.

However, a speculative reflection on the traditions of Western literary "travellers" must also reveal the opposite tendency: towards cultural dominance and

containment. Within this tradition, there resides an historical array of practices seeking to consume places in a manner reflecting back on the narrating culture, and, by implication, consequently tools of imperialism and colonialism. Such practices are apparent in some of the earliest travel encounters in the Western literary tradition, which subsequently have become models for cultural contact, surviving into the misnamed "postcolonial" era.[2] While this "colonial" reflexivity of vision is clearly present in the West's earlier histories of travel and exploratory contact, the narrative tropes that present the rest of the world as an arena for the working out of the West's concerns survive in contemporary tourist writings either to be reiterated or challenged. Of particular concern is the consideration that, although the vision of the West reflected in such mirrors seems to elicit a comparison (that can be either flattering or critical, or a combination of both, in its image of the West), the locality of the "other" tends to be flattened out, with its own subject-status obscured. Operating, consciously or not, in a way parallel to Edward Said's culturally differentiating conception of "orientalism" (*Orientalism* 22-3), and other constructed contexts such as romanticisms, modernisms or primitivisms, Western writers' "knowledge" of other cultures often asserts a claim to ownership based mostly on knowledge of their own culture: creating a surface of apparent knowledge that reveals less of the object of the Western observer's gaze, than a self-reflection of what Pierre Bourdieu terms "habitus." Bourdieu's conception of "habitus" as a feature that reveals particular training, class concerns and affiliations with others' praxis, is revealed in methodologies' assumption of tastes, values and concerns, situated around a

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[2] See Michel de Certeau, "Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals,'" *Heterologies.* 68. The pioneering travel "histories" of Pausanias or Herodotus can be seen as extending and consolidating the epistemic power base of the Greek world, by narrating its extent and features, and its surroundings, formalising its cultural influences, margins and the (barbarian) "other" to its civilisation. Edward Said also emphasises this early imperial dichotomy of viewing subjects as civilised and "other" in connection with ideas of "nationalism", (see Borofsky 445).

constructed social subjectivity. This process reveals a degree of cultural narcissism that requires addressing at length. Beyond this chapter's treatment, I pursue this issue of comparing "habitus" further, addressing the contexts which shape particular methodologies and ideologies when I touch on Chatwin's reflexive performativity of *nomadism*, Said's personal attempts to interrupt the tales the West tells itself about his native Palestine, and in the strictures present in the uneasy accommodation of immigrant narratives into Western literature.

However, before moving further afield in location and context, from chapter to chapter, I will start with examining aspects of contemporary tourist writing subjects in the arena of the Pacific, and intrinsic complications and resistances to these, and seek to assess the degree of the "mirroring" of older colonial discursive histories. My concentration on the latent and manifest colonial narratives that continue to be reflected off the surface of the Pacific focuses, firstly, on some popular examples of recent literary tourism in the region interspersed with discussions of current theory and comparison with recent writings by Pacific peoples. Included in my discussion of the local alternatives to an attempted European monological discourse, are a selection of the "anti-tourist" traits present in the writings of authors and critics such as Teresia Teaiwa, Sia Figiel, Robert Sullivan, John Pule, Epeli Hau'ofa and Albert Wendt. These alternatives are offered as an academic and artistic intervention into the narcissistic loop of touristic vision. Spliced together with this "local" survey, the three tourist texts principally examined are Paul Theroux's *The Happy Isles of Oceania*, Oliver Sacks' *The Island of the Colour-blind* and Jonathan Raban's *Passage to Juneau.* All three of these texts assert a claim to represent the region based on an historical assumption of authority, even when the authors are critical of the history of contact. This assumption of Western authority over the Pacific will be examined

through a theoretical and critical analysis of the authorial subjectivity and the historical "taintedness" of narrative forms and key motifs at work. Through this process, the suppression of the local and multi-vocal tendencies in colonial narrative forms is shown to be only partially effective when attempted.

Limiting Scope

The scope of this chapter represents a limited space for articulating some of the key concepts and areas involved in (re)viewing Pacific travel-writing. However, I hope to escape charges of a kind of *belittlement* at work in the inclusion of only brief excerpts from current indigenous Pacific authors and critics, and the assaying of traits in their literature, by developing a running commentary and paralleling of narratives throughout the chapter. Thus, while I concede that the chapter is by necessity limited in scope, I trust that it will not prove limiting in outlook.

As this chapter encompasses a critical analysis of cultural narcissism it nonetheless is in danger of somewhat diminishing the historical resistance to Western mediated representation by Pacific peoples. It needs to be stressed, again, that the Western history of representation is largely only one side of the story of cultural exchange in the Pacific, albeit one that has been more accessible to scholars. As my introductory comments suggest, the effects of hegemony can be overstressed. As any number of postcolonial theorists emphasise, another history is elided or partially obscured by some Western representations: a history of resistance and continuity, adaptation and hybridity of the local cultures. Although the impact of the West on the Pacific seems obvious in scope and depth when reading its texts, it must be pointed out that there has been a continual exaggeration in its supposed effects. These are stories that palagi tell themselves about their power. The possibility of countering-

readings can be projected against colonial tropes, especially where aspects of cultural taste and authority are contextualised against recognised local histories, stories, genealogies, local conceptions and representations of "place" covered in palagi texts. The widespread and varied travel between and beyond Oceania by Pacific peoples also extends the range of possible stories and their localities, a recognition that is currently experiencing a revival in scope and assessment of importance.

As Epeli Hau'ofa strongly maintains, the process of European mapping is a process of imposing artificial boundaries on a "sea of islands" that is conducive to a policy of cultural "belittlement", overriding the existence of local, traditional and contemporary strategies of placement ("Islands" 7). Although the "fatal impact" trope is the most obviously flawed technique of clearing the chart (as evidenced by the refusal of the Pacific peoples to die off as predicted), the general backwardness and cultural inferiority attributed to Oceania by some Western discourses is both imaginary yet nonetheless dangerously pervasive. Writers and critics such as Hau'ofa envision the necessity of projecting their own version of an imaginary Pacific to counter such Western mythology. A number of contemporary, local Pacific writers draw on the articulation of tropes of resistance and empowerment to counter cultural effacement, sometimes with an emphasis on mythic and oral traditions, the declaiming of family history and the continuing symbolism of tatau and even traditional navigational lore, at other times with an equally sophisticated adaptation of current critical theory, but usually with a concentration on the jarring cultural negotiations necessary for survival in the contemporary Pacific. Thus, both Wendt and Figiel reclaim the traditionally significant art of tatau from Western usage, but to new ends: ones that reflect the unavoidability of dealing with the implications of

contact.[3] Overall, these suggest a viable performance of cultural survival, interpellation and "writing back" against the eliding practices of the Western touristic vision, albeit with sometimes an uneasy accommodation in cultural hybridity.

Teresia Teaiwa's analysis of the meeting of diverse ideologies in the figuration of "bikini" strongly represents the fusion of historicist concerns with the contextualizing of continuing cultural contact, and provides a useful comparison to my palagi texts ("Bikinis"). The critical fusion at work by Teaiwa focuses on the "mystification of history"[4] implicit in the co-habitation of the bikini swimsuit as both a site for touristic interest and subjugation of the female body, and the continuing militaristic colonialism represented in the other of Bikini (Atoll): a co-habitation that also allows for a convergence of theory, feminist, psychoanalytic, and cultural, in a decolonising critical practice ("Bikinis" 104). According to Teaiwa, one bikini offers, paradoxically, the invisibility of a blanket covering of radiation: both in the sense of widespread radiation and a relative silence in the media about this issue. These are issues that are not limited to the perspective of Pacific peoples: later I revisit the militaristic, radioactive imperialism in palagi texts, firstly through Sacks' moral indignation and disgust at the American destruction of Pacific paradises and repressive military presence on Guam, then in Chatwin's uncomfortable symbolic confrontation with Britain's colonial and radioactive fallout in Australia. However, in the palagi texts, guilt and its responding denial complicate coverage of this subject. Teaiwa's other type of bikini introduces another important consideration within analysis of palagi narrative of the Pacific. *Her* analysis suggests the irony implicit in the re-importation of near-nudity to colonies or former colonies where historical

[3] See Wendt and Figiel. While Wendt's discussion of the tatau ranges from its traditional significance to a pride in its ability to indicate both survival and vibrant adaptation, Figiel offers a perspective on the embodiment of traditional female values and the shame of an "incompleteness" paralleled in interrupted markings and cultural mixing.

policies of "covering up" has resulted in an inversion of "puritanical" tastes alongside a mythical representation the feminine "exotic". It appears that historically divergent strands of palagi narrative could not agree on whether the Pacific should reflect a "virgin" paradise, or sexual availability: yet the result is nonetheless an erotically charged coverage of a more complex predicament. When the Western touristic gaze continues to seek an exotic and erotic other in its travels, what is often revealed (and highlighted by a coverage of patches, or even less) is the presence of more tourists actively seeking and displaying their own fixations with gendered issues. This criticism partly informs my following discussion of Theroux's disgust with missionaries and subsequently puritanical culture, and the ironically realised fulfilment of his exoticist desire in his confrontation with two naked Europeans. Similarly, the heated fixations on sites of gender, botany and marital status, inform the narrative development of Sacks and Raban. On the other hand, when Teaiwa suggests the political reality of Bikini islanders is displaced by the patchy coverage of a touristic "fetish" that is implicitly reflexive in answering its own desires, the act of emphasising such patchy coverage, the radical juxtapositions of contemporary Pacific cultural negotiations, expresses a resistance rather than complicity to the dislocating reflection present in much palagi travel writing and touristic desire focused upon the region. Her position instead offers a kind of cultural doubled-vision, embodied in an insider-outsider status: viewing her own subjectivity through the focus of a palagi desire machine as a tool for emphasizing the patchiness, and tackiness, of coverage.

Reaffirming this kind of analysis, I suggest that the three palagi authors examined can only offer a patchy coverage of what is one of the largest regions in the world and a sea of writings about it, even as this three-ringed-circus of celebrity

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[4] After John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*.

authorship sucks away the focus from other interesting possibilities, examples and particularizing exceptions to a totalising, colonialist *gaze*. However, in many ways, the patchiness of their coverage (and my attempts to explain it) is based on traits inherited from previous "authors". The books present views of different regions of the Pacific where this very activity of sectioning has a dubious colonial past. Theroux parcels up his travels, and many of his stereotypes, into divisions between "Meganesia", Melanesia and Polynesia. Sacks mostly limits himself to parts of Micronesia, despite meditations on the larger picture of Pacific inter-relations and some practice in "island hopping". Raban is imaginative in his parallel projection of landscape and seascape juxtaposed culturally and historically, but he, also, is "limited" by the political space of the American Pacific Northwest, and the intruding prominence of determining personal history in his travels. In this way, this "patchiness" of coverage represents conflicting and overlapping narrative concerns determined by scientific methodology, political geography, familial obligation, or racist typing, amongst a plethora of discursive influences, all of which are inflected upon by colonial or imperial narrative. In particular, where Theroux and Sacks distinguish between Melanesia and Polynesia, they are working within (or against) the legacy of divisions based on a tradition of Linnaean "anthropomorphology" and evolutionist biological racism (Carroll 24-5; Pratt 32-3), possibly partly ameliorated by considerations of language and culture groupings. However, the degree to which each writer balances local observation with prior (and often generalised) narratives, displays their different abilities at finessing difference and connection. They also represent different types of projects in historicizing these specific regions. Theroux's dependence on Romantic-Modernist narrative judgement, Sacks' development of a medico-scientific-fictional rationality, and Raban's yarn of comparative historical

anthropology, are representative of three partially differentiated (if connected) touristic habitus in the wake of previous European voyagers and textualised natives. The late twentieth-century experiences of journeying through the Pacific by these authors is unavoidably influenced by "tainted" histories, but the level of awareness and criticism of this taintedness is variably manifested in narratives that range from retracing and reaffirming to deconstructing tropes from the past into a new tradition (or conventions) of literary tourism, gesturing towards historical authority in the fascination with earlier literature of Pacific contacts. Although all three contemporary travel texts display varying degrees of internal resistance to the colonial past and awareness of local representational practices, the latent and manifest relics of colonialism are apparent as much in the subject matter incorporated, and the narrative models of the three authors. In effect, these authors all perceive the land(or sea)scape of the Pacific as textual, written largely by previous European travellers and dwellers.

Divergent Maps

Although the reflection of colonial activities can be seen in several areas, the process of encompassing and narrating the Pacific as a literary subject requires a symbolic engagement with the charting of the spatial dimension. Of course, the spatial treatment of the Pacific has a specific history of representation. In as much as all three books display a re-enactment or reconsideration of colonial narrative tropes, staking out different ideological placements in reaction to the colonialisms present in contemporary touristic experience, they each also present different physical sites in the Pacific. It is no coincidence that each of these palagi authors display maps prominently at the start of their texts: the history of charting is mimicked in the narrative treatment of each text and displaying these encompassing representations

also emphasizes these texts' debt to the aspect of already-charted, underwritten, habitus in place. Situating a map before the narrative proper thus allows a multiple assertion of authority. The map functions as device for creating ontological veracity: the author projects a "realistic" space for the narrative to follow, and a constructed expectation in the reader that the action will take place within the map's limits. At the same time the map attaches a provisional truth-effect to the author's tales which somewhat counteracts travellers' reputations as "liars" (Clark 1).[5] Cartography, as a meticulous science, sets up narrative subjects and the assertion of truthful treatment of them, which are reflected in Sacks' scientifically qualified discourse, and Raban's specific engagement with cartography as a subject allowing both a divergence and definition of histories. In substance, by quoting maps, and by extension those who have used them or ultimately created them, authors situate themselves in a tradition of spatial representation that shapes both their own narratives and the expectations of their culturally-specific readership. Thus, the multiple activities of mapping or charting remain symbolically important in narratives of power and knowledge, and predominantly culturally reflexive. As J.B. Harley argues,

> both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations. (Harley 278).

Maps, charts and travel itineraries, instead of providing an objective physical representation, can be shown to mirror particular Western discourses onto the surface of the great ocean and its cultures. Yet this is not to deny the residual entanglement of local narratives in map-making activities, or to ignore the possibilities of ambivalent

[5] This reputation is supported by the difficulties of verifying travellers' tales, some of which do turn out to be elaborate fabrications. Hence the continuing distrust of parts of Marco Polo's account and the

interpretation of maps. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, as an object and spatial device,

> the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by individual, group or social formation. (12).

Tracing the reworking of history in maps, and mapping in history, is to pursue some of the dimensions of exchange between cultures, and personal interests in individual "cartographers", within the sphere of the Pacific.

The literary mapping of the Pacific, which the palagi authors quote, is based on representative histories of uneven contact. As Rod Edmond and Ben Finney demonstrate, local knowledges and navigational models in early exploration are often written out of the account. At the least, involvement is marginalized representative of skills and knowledges that are "dying out" or as reflecting the distant past of mythologized great migrations. Social and topographical knowledge of the local is symbolically replaced in European maps with nominations and representations that reflect Europe's own interests and its own vision of itself as ascendant (Edmond 1-6; Finney). As Raban evaluates it, mathematics, and especially the development of cartographic geometry were representations of a paradoxically abstracting realism in the hands of "white explorers – intruders from the Age of Reason, for whom measurement, with quadrants, chronometers, and magnetic compasses, was a form of taking possession" (25). A recent manifestation of this practice is displayed in Jean Baudrillard's use of a literary device by Borges. Borges' is a fantastic, fraying, to-scale, "blanket" of an Imperial map, symbolically decaying at a rate consistent with the Empire's degradation, which Baudrillard draws on (as an example of "second order", reality-distorting, simulacra) to illustrate his argument for the primacy of the

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more substantially disproven inventions of the "Formosan", Psalmanazar, in Todorov.

simulacrum over the "real" (Baudrillard 166). Although seemingly absurd, Borges' emphasis on the very material nature of the map covering the "real" is evidently proved in the everyday trust in the "truth value" of maps as objects, to the point at which mimesis supersedes the "real", and people end up trusting representation more than their own eyes.[6] However, the presence of local knowledges of the Pacific is residual in European representations: if not present as the "real" underneath European simulacra, then at least as another layer of a fabric (possibly bark-cloth) of the "imaginary". This can be seen in a couple of encounters whose traces have survived as European maps, and which may act as predecessor models for subversive charts of the "local" present within my primary palagi texts. "Tupaia's Chart", which survives in versions by Cook and proto-racist, J. R. Forster (Edmond, 1-8), represents a schematic (Western) transcription of indigenous knowledge of islands surrounding Tahiti, and introduces an insider-outsider figure only partly successful in exclusion. Cook acknowledged that this local account demonstrated that "these people sail in those seas from Island to Island for several hundred Leagues, the Sun serving them for a compass by day and the Moon and Stars by night" (Cook qtd. in Finney 446-7). However, the fact that the placement, size and the naming of islands differs between the versions of Cook and Forster brings into question the chart's initial accuracy and clearly introduces an overwriting process (especially in the new, Western names of Forster) that elides the original version. This overwriting displays a dual displacement of the original: firstly the map loses its local materiality, being transposed by Western hands (even if the claim to authorship is partially retained in its title) and then figuratively in its appropriation by later, Western maps (Finney 446-7). Although the partial survival of the map is a concession to local knowledge and

[6] See Winterson's comment, quoted in an introduction epigraph.

ability, and local travel practice comparative to that of palagi's, the overwriting of this evidence quickly relegates these into the past. In a similar example, a chart produced by the Russian explorer, Otto von Kotzebue, depicting the Marshall Islands, is highly dependent on local informants yet also writes over them. In this case, however, the accuracy of the local cartographic skills is afforded some respect even as it is thoroughly consumed and regurgitated as Western representation. Kotzebue used this information as the sole basis for the placement of many the charted islands, so that, although the Ralik chain was not observed by the expedition, for instance, it was "appropriated" into Western cartography, nonetheless (Finney 453-7). Ross Gibson, writing about an earlier example of the West's charting of the Pacific (that of the "bungler", Pedro Fernandez de Quiros in 1605-6) also connects the symbolism apparent in early explorers' maps to an appropriative epistemological reflection:

> [de Quiros] made a strange map of the world in three colours: the known lands were rendered in gold, the oceans were luscious blue, and the unsurveyed South Pacific - the realm of his yearning, shame and anger - was lustrous black. The Pacific that de Quiros portrayed was lacking its own peculiar light but it was visible because the outside world shone on it. There was darkness, absence, even menace, but like every European who has come to the Pacific, de Quiros saw the region in the light of his own world's outside influence. This is how the darkness was made visible. The Pacific was glimmering for him not only with mystery but also with a lustre of predetermined comprehensibility. What he envisaged in the south was a refraction and projection of what he already knew and wanted. (Gibson, "I Could Not See" 25).

Gibson's view of de Quiros depicts a European sensibility that is particularly narcissistic in its observation of the Pacific. The (en)light(ened gaze) of Europe is heightened by the darkness of its object, a "lustrous black" vision of the South Seas that reflects back a flaming desire for wealth and fame, and the familiar.

These historic examples of geographic contact and representation demonstrate the process where the very mapping of the Pacific by Western hands and under Western eyes attempts to recreate the Ocean as a Western domain. While this appropriative process has a basis (and a "bias") in the genesis of such cartographic representation, it is also reaffirmed with each use of a Western map to navigate the Pacific: a use that actively shores up and extends the history of Western hegemony in the region, even as it adds to and updates the existing chart.[7]

Views From the West, Somewhat Elevated

In conjunction with mapping, different colonial practices of visual engagement, based on travelling, scientific, commercial or governmental observation, have used the (re)writing of place to consolidate a power over Pacific objects continuing to be expressed in contemporary palagi texts . Although Homi Bhabha is a controversial figure to cite in the scope of Pacific cultural debates,[8] I think he is useful, nonetheless in providing a succinct argument that colonial contact re-envisions localities, peoples and objects into a culture of their commodification as signs. Even in the case of direct colonial rule, however, the appropriation of the primitive cultural other and a desire for a "'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness is complicated by "ambivalence". Bhabha's conception of colonial ambivalence is the feature

[7] Hence, for instance, Theroux's reliance on a map drawn "from a British survey in 1898" (405) to navigate a Robinsonade fantasy of a desert island in Tonga, ironically, a popular pursuit (434).

[8] A number of theorists find Bhabha, or, rather, simplified interpretations of his writings, unpalatably irrelevant in the Pacific, based on what is perceived to be a totalising and contextually inappropriate focus. Alex Calder, Jonathan Lamb and Bridget Orr are particularly vehement in wishing to exclude Bhabha and other "Subaltern Studies group" members from their zone of inquiry, on the grounds that the conditions in Oceania do not include the "elements of a sophisticated market, such as labor, class, commoditization, and feminism," necessary to support Bhabha's "way of thinking" (see "Introduction," *Voyages and Beaches* 4-5). It is notable that even Albert Wendt may ridicule Bhabha's "postcolonial" refiguration of terminology. (see Wendt 411) However, I would suggest that much of this criticism trivialises a valuable vein of praxis for analysing the muddied colonial waters of the Pacific. While it is crucial to take into account the specific historical conditions of Oceania, it is not hard for me to see much that is relevant between demarcated zones of inquiry.

> that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensur[ing] its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. (Bhabha 66).

Although a useful (and necessary, in Bhabha's view) tool of colonial discourse, the malleability of ambivalence can work against its imperial articulation: ambivalence is also a site of resistance to authority. Through slippages between the differences articulated by the stereotyping scopic drive, Bhabha conceives of a space available to challenges of the "fixity" of discursive relations:

> in the objectification of the scopic drive there is always the threatened return of the look; in the identification of the Imaginary relation there is always the alienating other (or mirror) which crucially returns its image to the subject; and in that form of substitution and fixation that is fetishism there is always the trace of loss, absence... the recognition and disavowal of 'difference' is always disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction. (81).

Bhabha's subject of colonial discourse is empowered by the ambivalence inherent in the "conflictual desires" of that discourse which cannot decide whether to treat "primitives" as abject absence or fantastic reflection. The agency of the native to look back furthermore complicates the role of fetishistic objectification.

There are points of comparison to be made between Bhabha's psychoanalytic approach and Nicholas Thomas' ambivalent primitives. At least a dual signification is present in Thomas' review of otherness and the placement of its value in an expansionist Western culture. At one extreme, Thomas notes the denigration of primitives as backward examples of the evolutionary progress, fit (for example) as subjects for conversion or to be turned into a labouring class. On the other hand of

expansionist modernity, however, is the component critical of capitalist alienation. In the neo-romantic or modernist critique, workers who are

> engage[d] in highly mechanised or specialised work, are drawn into a larger, impersonal, industrial world, and out of a 'community' or network of authentic, kin-structured relationships that characterised societies closer to nature. This ideology of primitivism celebrates simple societies because they display what has been lost and provide a model for a more wholesome and fulfilling way of living. (Thomas, *Entangled Objects* 10).

Both theorists suggest a colonial use for the primitive in terms of an appropriative gaze that places the subject in a variety of (contradictory) roles serving Western interests. Primitive signs (including both racial and, again, sexual stereotypes) have been used for a range of political and social purposes in the Pacific. Among these the colonial iconography that attempts to represent a national identity (nominally) separate from the imperial motherland, and which seeks to "naturalise" and dehistoricize local culture for white settler use appears prominently in contexts like Australia and New Zealand. In this strategy, cultural artefacts are included alongside other "natural" landmarks and other native flora and fauna, celebrating the "locally distinctive" as an exotic appeal to new national identity. The "sign" of the plastic tiki functions in this manner, occluding its cultural origins in its mass-production and dissemination: fusing its "natural" symbolism with its tacky artificialness in the creation of nationalist "kiwiana." However, this appeal is at best paradoxical; residing as it does with unstable claims to a "native" status in settler culture and in iconographic reminders of indigenous peoples, the legitimacy of such identification is self-limited. (Thomas, *Possessions* 12-3).

Alongside and against this, the discourse of primitive-ness creates categories of lack that require the civilising missions of Western culture. In this respect, depictions

of primitives as heathens, uneducated, savage and unclean, are useful as grounds for expansion, physical and ideological, into new territories. Thomas argues that the flexible partition between representations of "savage" and "exotic" primitives, accentuating barbaric or attractively different features of natives, is demonstrable in the different colonial treatment of Melanesian and Polynesian peoples. (Thomas, "Damned" 49). Yet, even when the primitive is valorised rather than reviled in discourse (or mixed between poles of reaction), visitors' collection of the signs of "primitive" culture often reflect expectations prematurely met, and artefacts are taken from their appropriate roles in the context of a continuing cultural history.[9]

Romantic and modernist discursive treatments of the primitive, advancing the value of "nature" or "authentic", primordial cultures within the artistic consciousness, express criticism of aspects of Western modernity that are all too readily reassumed into the repressive structures of the same modernity. Hence Paul Gauguin, who was perceived (by August Strindberg) as "the savage who hates the restraints of civilization... [he is] the child who takes his toys apart to make others," dressed himself in various pieces of ethnic costume (including *pareu* [Eisenman 98]), and celebrated primitivism through art and activism as a means of challenging modernity's assumptions by "return[ing] to the original source, to the childhood of man" (Eisenman 201). Yet despite the impact of his art and the continuing influence it has on some Pacific activists and theorists, work containing an ambivalent "hybridity" of representation that allows subjects to assert themselves (Eisenman 9, citing Bhabha), some post-colonial and feminist critics justifiably assert that "Gauguin upheld a version of primitivism that was indistinguishable from racism and

[9] James Clifford presents some exhibitions which he feels redresses this kind of cultural appropriation. For him, exhibitions such as the modernist-tribal displays featured at MOMA in and collections that also articulate the displayed-cultures' involvement heal "the taxonomic split between art and artefact", historicizing art. "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," (*Predicament* 206).

misogyny" (Eisenman 18, after Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Griselda Pollock). Gauguin's position as a wealthy bourgeois colonist, sexual libertine, and artist-hero somewhat undermines a radical stance against modernity and colonial administration in particular, shifting the focus of the "primitive" into the hegemonic area of "'imperialist nostalgia,' the yearning for what one is directly responsible for destroying" (Eisenman 53). This is a position that I will argue has come to be occupied by his cultural descendant, and fellow misanthrope, Paul Theroux.

Informally allied to more overt effects of cultural hegemony, contemporary tourism is in many ways a continuation of historical as well as spatial reflexivity in relationships with particular types of "gaze" and objects. Contemporary tourists, in common with other historical travellers, are often advantaged by uneven political and economic development, with a surplus of capital and leisure that inflects the desire for sights and sites of the "primitive" and "exotic". An examination of the ensuing colonial desires and resulting stereotypes shows a connected process and project of colonialism even while they produce multiple and often contradictory effects. The uneven and multilayered contacts with Oceanic cultures can and must be historically and spatially differentiated, yet it is possible to map trends and persistent tropes of representation at work. The persistence of a number of tropes central to particular, but connected, colonial narrative types (for example conquest and anti-conquest narratives, beachcomber, boys' adventure, captivity and quest romance archetypes [Edmond 304]) is also intimately connected to particular modes and institutions of contact. The discourses of explorers, natural scientists and anthropologists, beachcombers, missionaries, traders, adventurers and government representatives, as well as those whose travel roles, real or armchair variety, are more explicitly aesthetic, are clearly littered with tropes and inhabitants of the mythical past. These

are revisited in visions of an empty sea, populations that are idealised or reviled, infantilised as innocents for recreation and (salvational) education, or as moral and genetic savages (emphasising cannibalism, thievery and laziness) for a racist purpose, romantically doomed by contact, or available as happy and enthusiastic converts to Christianity, free-trade or Western domestic bliss. Overall, it is obvious that many Western representations of the Pacific have been, and continue as, visions not of a place but a *space* in which to portray Western preoccupations, utopian, dystopian or a mixture of the two. The political implications of the commodification of place and the contemporary travel writer's authority need to be viewed against this historical and spatial tradition of representation.

Theroux: Nostalgia and Loathing in "The Happy Isles".

Looking at Paul Theroux's *The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific* reveals an aestheticized bias in his activity of historically embedded speculation and self-reflection, and a project that is in contrast with his subjective positioning elsewhere.[10] The persona of Theroux encountered in the book views the Pacific with an elitist tourist gaze that reflects various expectations based on Western representations of the history of contact. These expectations are constructed around several specific notions and subsequent positions. A reflection of a romantic or modernist essentialism, encapsulated in the representation of the Pacific as primitive, is a recurrent speculative notion, and one that fixates on the backward glance as the chief mode of observation. A major part of Theroux's project can be described (in Pratt's words) as, "the white man's lament [which] is also the lament of the Intellectual and the Writer" (Pratt 221).

The tenor of Theroux's lament is a compound one. In part it is based on the conception of a passing mode of travel and model of traveller. The configuration of travel and traveller is also consolidated around the ambivalent figure of the "doomed" primitive. Theroux's position as a traveller is intensely class-based: privileged and "realistic" in opposition to mass-tourist packaging and consumption of place. His gaze is presented, in comparison to that of the mass-tourist, as individuated and sophisticated, "involving vision, awe and aura" (Urry 191), a point stressed in his narration and championed by sometime reviewer, Paul Fussell. Fussell, another nostalgic elitist, celebrates Theroux as possessing a "sharp eye, which is capable of such shrewd perception" (Pratt 220). Indeed, Theroux is perceived as very much the exemplary "gentleman traveller" of Western modernity that Fussell eulogises in *Abroad*: the artist-traveller associated valiantly with the modernist conception of "exile" (Kaplan 50). In accordance with notionally "exilic" writers like Conrad, Joyce, Pound and Eliot, Fussell's shortlist of "real" travel writers (all white, male, of "gentrified" status, and British) are validated as canonical because of the "truth" of their travel experience but also, through literary status and their social position, in their maintenance of cultural norms (Kaplan 54).

Likewise, travel for Theroux is nominally the sign of escape from the ills of Western culture yet actually functions more pragmatically as an indicator and device for the further elevation of Western culture's "inescapable" scope and power. It follows that, when analysed, many of Theroux's "sharp perceptions" and social criticisms reveal themselves as shallow stereotype that signals as their source a tradition of romanticised and reflexive speculation (Pratt 220): a realisation that again summons Bhabha's consideration of stereotype as a standardised "currency" (Bhabha

[10] Although Theroux is typically abrasive and dismissive of locals in many of his other literary forays, I would argue that a fictional essay like the one in *Granta* 61, "Unspeakable Rituals", displays a much

66). Theroux's effect of "realism" is merely one of comparative affect because it is based on the commonality and commonplace acceptance of stereotype. What may often seem familiar, natural and realistic in his depictions of locals to a Western reader is based on a foundation of everyday, cultural stereotype that is ideologically constructed (Pratt 220); he assumes a readership sympathetic to the trials of dealing with horrific tourist culture (Theroux 5, and throughout), and sets up an expectation of shared habitus with his readers to defend his subjective positioning of taste. Taste, as defined by Bourdieu, is a feature of class-consciousness and affiliation, and to an extent both naturalised and determined by class conditions. Talking of the working class, he suggests:

> Taste is *amor fati*, the choice of destiny, but a forced choice, produced by conditions of existence which rule out all alternatives as mere daydreams and leave no choice but the taste for the necessary.
>
> The taste of necessity can only be the basis of a life-style "in itself," which is defined as such only negatively, by an absence, by the relationship of privation between itself and the other lifestyles.[...] The brand which Marx speaks of ["the division of labour brands the manufacturing worker as the property of capital"] is nothing other than life-style, through which the most deprived immediately betray themselves, even in their use of spare time; in so doing they inevitably serve as a foil to every distinction and contribute, purely negatively, to the dialectic of pretension and distinction which fuels the incessant changing of taste. (*Distinction* 178)

The elements of taste most obvious in Theroux, noticeable in the manner his mode of travel is compared to others' and in the way he treats the subjects of his travel, reflect the "dialectic of pretension and distinction" based on his social and "aesthetic" position. The "necessity" of Theroux's taste may seem to, paradoxically, reveal a

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more sophisticated and ambivalent attitude to "primitive" material.

greater deal of choice and agency while not considering the limitations of choice available to his subjects, but it follows that even Theroux has been limited (with complicity) in the field of taste reference. Hence, Theroux's posture of elitist ennui and artistic "vividness", an affect of his particular, class-affiliated habitus, may contrast with mass-tourist, low-culture enthusiasm (branded by a division of leisure parallel to the division of labour). However, Theroux's taste is no less fanciful in its portrayal of place and inhabitants, no less determined in its association with cultural capital.

Colonial Baggage Claims and "Authentic" Traditions.

The practices of charting the Pacific in *The Happy Isles* reflect the book's construction and ownership by palagi writers' authority. Theroux's "map" of the Pacific is authorised by a tradition of previous texts and colonial tropes. This makes his voyages partially the activity of a voyeur and reader, and his text a reinscription or authentication of the region's colonial past and present. His concentration on his travels through the Pacific as a trip into, and desire for, the past is explicit among these concerns. Theroux's often very explicit name-dropping of previous Western writers and travellers throughout his book emphasizes this. Theroux quotes, paraphrases and is influenced by historic predecessors such as Bougainville, Diderot, Defoe, Melville, Stevenson, Gauguin, London, Malinowski and D.H. Lawrence. All of these writers share some striking characteristics with each other and Theroux's persona in terms of race, gender, class and education. These shared characteristics cannot but inflect upon their cumulatively constructed (if not undifferentiated), colonial vision of the Pacific. Similarly, when in Australia, Theroux mediates his own observations with the "sharp perceptions" of close contemporaries like Bruce

Chatwin, Patrick White and Nicolas Roeg, recognising himself alongside these "adventurers" (60), acclaimed authors (57), and visionaries (66). This practice of "name-dropping" serves a multiple function. Theroux establishes a particular tradition of perception, validating texts, and pedigree of authorship to provide support for his own views and to construct a "learned" aura for their expression.

However, Theroux does not present himself as a passive recipient of prior knowledge, and his text is more (or less) than an encyclopaedic scrapbook of quotation. Where *The Happy Isles* may seem to display intertextuality, Theroux asserts his own authority over the material, as editor, critic and against his own experience *in situ.* His predecessors are bowdlerised or ridiculed when necessary, allowing Theroux to construct himself both as a well-informed member of the literati *and,* perhaps more importantly, as one literally grounded in the "realism" of his own travel experience (Kaplan 53). This is clearly demonstrated when, in the Trobriands, Theroux paraphrases and quotes Malinowski's written experience often eliding the source (for example 137,155-6),[11] and then inserts his own, more "realistic", commentary. The elision of direct reference functions as an assimilation of knowledge and expertise, possibly suggesting a desired readership of similar education, who have already read the source and understand his interpretation, or readers made aware of the author's superior knowledge and scholarship, unable to easily verify the version presented here. The latter suggestion seems the more likely after reading Theroux's insistence on his own superior local observation over Malinowski. This commentary is displaced into a local's mouth:

> I said, "Have you ever heard of Malinowski?"

[11] Beyond indicating that he has read *The Sexual Life of Savages* and Malinowski's posthumously published diaries.

> "I have heard of him," Sam said, and he laughed. "'The Islands of Love.' I have never read his books, but someone told me about him when I was in Moresby."
>
> "What did they say?"
>
> "He came here. Maybe he came during the Yam Festival. So he thought we were like that all the year. I think he generalised about us." (140)

The islander's judgement that Malinowski "generalised about us" indirectly sets up a criterion for Theroux's text: that he will not fall into the same error. For the reader sensitive to unintentional irony, though, the words provide an example of the subaltern voices that Theroux constantly glosses over with his own "generalisations": stereotypes confirmed in his racist epithets (for instance, in blasé renditions of "lazy" Samoans and fat Tongan "thieves"). I would suggest that what Bhabha calls the threatened "return of the look" is a site of anxiety for Theroux that he hastily covers over with stereotype. Such a reflex conforms to Teaiwa's perception of palimpsest tendencies of colonial symbolic commodification: for instance dressing up the serious issue of Bikini Atoll in a holiday swimsuit (Bhabha 81; Teaiwa "Bikini"). However, the passage also indicates Theroux's attempts to anticipate and control such criticism. Simply by depicting this islander's speech Theroux provides a response to "generalising", suggesting a direct access to knowledge in the appearance of an unmediated native informant. The awareness of the (possible) limitations of Malinowski's study is reliant on this privileged, local knowledge. At the same time, though, Theroux's own knowledge of Malinowski (*he* has read him), places him in a superior position to the local informant, who is acting on hearsay. Theroux negotiates a similar position of authority both through and against other, traditional textual informants: when he authenticates his view of outback Australia by quoting

correspondence from Bruce Chatwin, without mentioning *The Songlines* (66);[12] in misremembering the "essential Australia" of Roeg's *Walkabout* (59-61), yet remembering the important scene which showed "the girl (Jenny Agutter, aged 16) peeling off her school uniform"[13]; in his affectionately patronising depiction of Robert Louis Stevenson going native in "Royal Stuart tartan *lava-lava*" (440-1); and in debunking Melville's *Typee* as populist, "ha[ving] everything - sex, nakedness, fresh fruit, warfare and cannibalism," and yet clearly relishing and dwelling on such features in his own narrative (524-5).

Theroux's role as an iconoclast is both limited and temporary, with the qualifications and criticisms of these figures designed to present their view as his view: *authentic*. Theroux constantly manipulates knowledge and ignorance in a hierarchical manner that always restores the author himself as both the representative of tradition and the figure best able to test them in the field. Consolidating this, Theroux's vision of the Pacific is thoroughly narcissistic: projecting the personal and cultural baggage of the writer alike, in terms of the representation of place. With further analysis, I will demonstrate more clearly how the tone and substance of his writing present a specific class, gender and privileged geographical origin in his travelling role and consequent experience of place, effecting a version of the pathetic fallacy. The doomed "nature" of Theroux's Pacific can be attributed to the nostalgic elitist position he fashions for himself, and a conflation with his own fear of abandonment, disease and death.

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[12] Although Chatwin's project is somewhat different to Theroux's, the latter author is indebted in his concentration of "typical" white Australia's racist bigotry. See my chapter on Chatwin and nomadic performance.

[13] In this description he misremembers its release date, asserts a conspiracy theory that has meant that it has been removed from circulation (also inaccurate), similarly asserts that everyone had the same "enchanted" reaction as he did to "the way it encompassed Australia."

Nostalgic Doom

Within the textualising of the Pacific, with its history of written-overness represented in these tropological and topographical concerns, the figure of the author is discernible, reflecting a tradition of artistic travel and observation, a sense of intellectual distance, taste and *authority* encapsulated in a sense of nostalgic doom. This sense of self-reflective nostalgia is stated clearly as Theroux's travel practice early in the book:

> My need for this strange landscape was profound. Travel, which is nearly always seen as an attempt to escape from the ego, is in my opinion the opposite. Nothing induces concentration or inspires the memory like an alien landscape or a foreign culture. It is simply not possible (as Romantics think) to lose yourself in an exotic place. Much more likely is an experience of intense nostalgia, a harking back to an earlier stage in your life, or seeing clearly a serious mistake. But this does not happen to the exclusion of the exotic present. What makes the whole experience vivid, and sometimes thrilling, is the juxtaposition of the present through the past - London seen from the heights of Harris Saddle. (22)

Theroux's self-fashioning project is anchored in a vision of the past that is superimposed on the present, elevated perspective. Barthes' term, *spectrum* provides an elision of this sense of process of "spectating" on the present with the persistence of the past: a "return of the dead" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 9). This is also, arguably, the drive for historiography itself. De Certeau discusses this drive as the impulse behind the "myth of language": as the desire to articulate or make intelligible the rupture between past and present constituted in the use of "absent term[s]". The mythopoeic quality of historiography is present, in that "[i]t manifests the very condition of discourse: *a death,*" attempting to create a presence out of an absence (de Certeau, *History* 46-8). Theroux attempts to distance himself from charges of

mythopoeic romanticism (or any connection with anti-realist aesthetics), however, the Neo-Romantic and Modernist mirror-images of the distant past and the ruined present are abundantly clear, haunting Theroux's project, whether he is scoping the impressive ruins of the Marquesas or making cultural mileage out of his valorised mode of transport.

The primary means for assessing Theroux's romantic notion of the "doomed" Pacific is through an examination of the morally charged reiterations of "fatal contact". According to this trope, the *history* of contact can truly be equated with death. For some contemporary commentators, the very term "contact" has irremediable (and moralistic) associations with the very real decimating impact of the West upon Oceania. Epeli Hau'ofa, for instance, writes about the semantic conflation that has existed in his mind for years. After a visit to Papua New Guinean hospital and a "serious and concerned" lecture from a missionary sister instructing him "to be very careful, for any slight body contact with the local inhabitants would cause much misery", Hau'ofa concedes that

> since then I have always associated the word *contact* with nasty infections. As used by historians and other scholars the term is very apt; it describes accurately the first and early encounters between Oceanians and European sailors as carriers of dangerous diseases that wiped out large proportions of our populations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hau'ofa, "Epilogue" 455).

Certainly, the reputation of the West's "ecological imperialism" as costly to its subjected societies has some merit. Large populations apparently melted away after contact with the West, in the multiple effects of war, disease, starvation, and infertility.[14] Although there are rational explanations for these effects, with such an undeniable connection between contact and death, the ascent of aesthetic, moral and

mythic dimensions in explanation are pronounced and not to be unexpected. Rod Edmond extends the historical significance of contact as infection, talking of the

> legible evidence of Western diseases on blemished native bodies [that] haunted writing about the Pacific from the early moments of contact.... At the heart of the European paradise of the South Pacific,... a counter-discourse of the diseased Pacific began almost simultaneously (194).

This emphasis "infects" many of the historical accounts up to the present. For instance, in the renowned scholarly debate centred around the differing interpretations of Cook's death of Sahlins and Obeyesekere, Lamb, Smith and Thomas argue that the latter displays a lack of consideration of surviving or adaptive features in the islanders, "claiming subaltern status for the Hawaiians and finding that their culture had been irrevocably destroyed by Cook" (Lamb, Smith, and Thomas xiv-xv). Obeyesekere, it is argued, is reiterative of Alan Moorehead's thesis (set out unmistakably in his title, *The Fatal Impact*) of the European "penetration of the Pacific", which, through the corrupting introduction of "firearms, disease or alcohol, or by imposing an alien code of laws and morals that had nothing to do with the slow, *natural* rhythm of life on the island[s] as it had been lived up till then," fatally disturbed the happy state of islanders before this point (Lamb, Smith, and Thomas xiv-xv; Moorehead 3, emphasis added). The paternalizing conceit of "happy savages" regretfully and inevitably destroyed by contact also is obvious in the literature of the region.

More figuratively, Edmond's focus on the figure of the leper in Jack London's work, as emblematic of the conflation of desire and disease, provides a precursory insight into Theroux's conception of contact. The "sexualising" of disease (suggesting a moral, or implicit sexual origin for South Sea afflictions) is emphasised

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[14] The scientific analysis of "contact" and disease will be further examined in relation to Sacks.

by an explicit attention to the body of the native, "marked" by the difference of ill health just as it is "marked" by the inscription of race (Edmond 196). Racial identity became a signifier of ill health, a manifestation of Kristeva's "abject" (disordered or unclean) bodies, and led towards parallel segregationist policies, based on race and infection (Edmond 202). However, the figurative issue of purity and its connection to health is contradictory. London's Pacific (and specifically, the Marquesas of *his* predecessor, Melville) is perceived as a "doomed" paradise, explained in terms that are

> exclusively biological. The Taipi were too pure to survive. The white race, on the other hand, survives because it is the descendant of generations of survivors of the war with micro-organisms. Natural selection decrees the 'we who are alive are the immune, the fit - the ones best constituted to live in a world of hostile micro-organisms'. The white race, in fact, flourishes on impurity and corruption while the Marquesans, having undergone no such selection, are doomed to extinction (Edmond 207).

Such a consideration is an example of a common type of European mythology, expressed in the language of social or biological Darwinism, and one in the array of primitivising narratives at play in the Western tradition. In this scheme the "primitive" islanders are valued and authenticated through their inevitable death. The racialised opposition of the "white race... flourish[ing] on impurity and corruption" is ambivalently positioned as superior to the lamented, inherent weaknesses of the Marquesans. Partially through guilt, but also in celebration, the Western mythmakers effectively displace consideration of "primitive" cultures from the present and the future, and into an undifferentiated, eternal past. Hau'ofa also notes this tendency in the dehistoricizing role of histories of contact in destroying local histories: effectively

relegating pre-contact cultures to oblivion or primeval mythic pasts, "footnotes of the histories of empires" (Hau'ofa, "Epilogue" 455-6).

Theroux replicates and emphasises narratives of contact that feature this moralist foreshortening of history in his own writing. The most powerful facets of his moral focus are evident as repetitions of "fatal contact" allied with conceptions of "primitive" culture. In *The Happy Isles,* reflections on the ministries of war and religion, the depiction of cultural ruins, a presentation of cultural hybridity as a dead end, and the economic and cultural disadvantages of the Pacific are explicated in the language of lack, disease and death. Through the referential presence of war throughout the book, Theroux's contemporary Pacific is shadowed by threats of ruination and aggression that are disquietingly at odds with often paradisal and isolated surroundings. The author seeks to confirm in Fijians a "natural" warrior status, accentuating the "reputation for ferocity" (343). In his repeated encounters with weapons (from a "'Gannibal glub'" (290) to "pirates' cutlasses" (346)), the legacy of Rabuka's coups, and meetings with current and former soldiers and "mutineers", Theroux constructs Fiji as a military society. The savage relics of war are also present in the Solomons as reminders of concurrent local and "global" conflicts. The "wicked-looking spikes and rusting hulks of Second World War wreckage" share the Guadalcanal tide-line with a bloated dead pig (201), emphasising the currency of war shared with neighbouring Bougainville and the constant, radioed-presence of the Gulf War (209). In French Polynesia, that region's colonial power is justifiably reviled for its arrogant nuclear contamination of Mururoa, another reminder of martial "contact" (528-9). Similarly, the spoiling effects of missionaries dog Theroux, either present as converted "holy commandos" (260) or the infuriating (and what he considers hypocritical) restrictions of the Sabbath (436). These joint

"cohorts" are represented as effecting fatal changes on the Pacific that Theroux can only catalogue in their wake. However, he also perceives the very "nature" of islanders as contributing to their downfall.

Humboldt's description of the early nineteenth-century South Sea Islanders as "a mixture of perversity and meekness" living in a "state of half-civilisation", is echoed in Theroux's vision of natives, fallen by contact with the West, but also fallen through simplistic "nature". In this view natives are vulnerable due to incomplete, unsophisticated culture (Edmond 110). By noting this feature of his nostalgic gaze, I signify that Theroux follows Pratt's observation of Humboldt's project, divorcing natives from his scenery, often through the symbolic use of archaeological discourse. Striding through the great ruins of the Marquesas or Samoa, Theroux can treat past natives as artefacts, and judge today's locals as "degenerate" and separate from these traditions. As Pratt contends, in her analysis of Humbolt's praxis,

> the links between the societies being archaeologized and their contemporary descendants remain absolutely obscure, indeed irrecoverable. This, of course, is the point. The European imagination produces archaeological subjects by splitting contemporary non-European peoples off from their precolonial, and even their colonial pasts. To revive indigenous history and culture as archaeology is to revive them *as dead.* The gesture simultaneously rescues them from European forgetfulness and reassigns them to a departed age. (Pratt 134).

In keeping with this sentiment Theroux selectively cites Western sources and avoids much local consultation, denying the contemporary Pacific peoples a chance of building on these "ruins" through the performance of cultural memory. In effect, Theroux both displaces and dehistoricizes the present, in favour of past foreigners' accounts. This mannerism confirms what John Urry suggests is a "romantic form of the tourist gaze, in which the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-

spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze" (137). Theroux's primitivism, displacing the social past into a scenic "natural" domain, is a bourgeois construction that at once empties the frame of competing cultural histories and displays the author as an adventurous observer pitted against a natural "sublime": a contemplative consumption of "nature" which Barthes characterises as "bourgeois promoting... [by means of epic landscape] to encourage a morality of effort and solitude" and "reducing geography to the description of an uninhabited world of monuments" (*Mythologies* 74, 76). The cultural signs present are therefore presented as invasive, and insurmountable (as there is no local competition): a stance that ignores his complicity in the celebratory lamentation of the effects of contact on this "edenic" Pacific. The reflection of the waning Pacific, symbolised finally in the text with the narration of the figurative death of the sun (a solar eclipse), mirrors an image of the West as the obscurant body, implicit in this collapse, yet also superior to it:

> I scrunched my eyes and glanced away, as though peering at a forbidden thing..., the air had already begun to grow cool.... At last the sun was in total darkness as though a dinner plate had slid across it – the hand of God, someone had predicted, and that was how it seemed, supernatural.... By 7:29 our world had been turned upside down. Again the stars appeared in daytime, the temperature dropped, flower blossoms closed, birds stopped singing, and we sat transfixed on our cooling planet, watching light drain from the world. (732-3)

Theroux may seem to stake a claim for realism in his discourse, yet the romanticised versions of colonialist desire and disgust are ever-present in these metaphysically reminiscent motifs of doom. The "dying" Pacific depicted in notions of an inherent, "natural" fragility, its passing rendered inevitable by the contact with the West, projects a thoroughly external vision of cultural nostalgia onto the region and an overblown reflection on his own supposed ill-health (a subjective positioning

displaying similarities to an ailing Stevenson meeting a "Polynesian world represented in similarly terminal decline" [Edmond 161]). This is coupled with a hyperbolic assumption of the rapacious strength of the West, with the effect of recreating Pacific people as silent victims.

The "doomed contact" motif also infects Theroux's project in a more mundane, personally nostalgic conception. In his travels, the author is "doomed" to meet figures that do not meet his criteria of epic adventure. His project is often revealed as a negatively comparative one. He is negative in his nostalgic comparison with his own "gentlemanly" tone of travel observation and other, contemporary practices. His posture as an elite, aesthetically superior travel-writer as opposed to a mere tourist observer is demonstrated in his lack of credulity in relation to the modern sites and sights of the Pacific and a valorising of authentic "inquiry" rather than passive consumption (Kaplan 53, citing Fussell's term, "inquiry", as the marker for a superior, "real" travel writer). Theroux encapsulates this distinction early in a glib cliché, when he posits, "*Tourists don't know where they've been... Travellers don't know where they're going*" (5). This almost echoes a sentiment glibly stated by Fussell: "if the explorer moves towards the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves toward the security of the pure cliché" (qtd. in Kaplan 53). However, this opposition between ignorance and adventure is one that is not maintained in Theroux's own practice, despite his obvious snobbery. His last chapter seems, strikingly, to have been conceived of as a tourist guide on accommodation in Hawaii, even if he introduces it, ironically, as the historical site of Cook's death (712). In addition, the tourists that he ridicules for their superficiality, their numerical "collection" and consumption of place (rather than qualitative) and lack of accuracy (confusing Fuji and Haiti with Fiji and Tahiti), are nonetheless mimicked by his own reliance on

stereotype, superficial and repetitive prejudice, and similar flaws of accuracy, and his own accumulative itinerary, counting the "fifty-one islands in Oceania" visited (697), displays a similar quantitative exercise to those of the ridiculed Century Club, which "you can only join if you've been to a hundred countries" (5).

The quality of risk that maintains a sense of adventure in travel experience, even in mass-tourism, is also ironically equalised (Urry 188). Theroux questions the definition of the Century Clubbers' itinerary: "What does 'been to' mean? Pass through the airport? Spend a night? Get diarrhoea?"(5). However, a couple of chapters on, he reveals that he mundanely suffers from diarrhoea himself, "constantly" (42). Even his own particularly adventurous mode of transport, the collapsible boat in which he will paddle around the Pacific, is often displayed as just more airline luggage, the realistically preferred mode of transport air-conditioned and drinks-serviced at 20,000 feet above the waves of his supposed location. On the occasions when his boat serves to do more than clutter up his hotel wardrobe, the journeys he assays are mostly just beyond the surf line, and as much as these trips display a physical prowess that goes somewhere towards balancing the literary pretentiousness and preciousness of many of his other stances, they remain a nonetheless ironic basis for a frequently negative cultural relativism.

Theroux's further disgust with the cultural hybridity of sites such as the Honolulu red-light district, with its flesh-pot attractions refashioning the colonial fascination with the exotic and erotic into a multicultural touristic product, and Easter Island's inauthentic locals (racially mixed, and with a history of movement between locations), displays his elitist stance for a nostalgic Pacific only present in particular colonial narratives. The nostalgic pose of Theroux thus harks back to a notion of Honolulu as culturally innocent and "pure", just as he yearns for the authentic,

original people and language of Easter Island. Of course this view simplifies the past and reduces the surviving features of the original people and cultures. His presentation of both Hawaiian and Easter Island languages as spoiled or inauthentic is particularly contentious, equating missionaries' transcriptions into writing of these original languages with an act of destruction rather than preservation (605, 704).[15] Theroux's concept of what constitutes a native language is basically flawed in its primitivist insistence on stasis. Hawaiian is still a spoken language, if somewhat changed over time, and by interaction with other tongues, and the language spoken on Easter Island, which was apparently a dialect of "Tahitian" at the time of first European contact, may not have faced a great deal of *corruption* by the introduction of Tahitian versions of the bible. Theroux's commentary on language is also ironic, considering his own attempts at peppering local words into his narrative are often flawed (for example, "*pakehes*" (15)) and makes his own English less than "authentic". Also, the wake of colonial trade, religious missions and political rule is notable in the widespread use of Pidgin and simple dialects of English, eminently useful both in Theroux's comprehension of the Pacific and his stance of linguistic superiority. The primitive languages that have been ousted from pre-eminence (primitive partly because of their vulnerability) have been replaced by inferior versions of his "master narrative" and narratives of mastery.

Such connections hint that in this voyage Theroux is doomed to prejudge the Pacific from the beginning. The twentieth-century elite travel-writer is doomed not just by the previous centuries of destructive contact, and the current debasement of travel into tourism, however, but is also prepared to be betrayed by the locals' tendency to change and become hybrid. As Rod Edmond points out, such a modernist

[15] In this, Theroux echoes the thesis of Claude Levi-Strauss' aggression of the pen, later critiqued by Derrida in "The Violence of the Letter".

artist can only be disgusted by this tendency as a form of cultural degeneration or death (293). Theroux's primitivist "fancy" is certainly not uniformly idyllic. Theroux's narrating "I", and the viewing "eye" that informs it, are complicated with resonating colonial practices of denigration, embodied in a mirror imaging of the body of the native and its continuing colonial associations with death, eroticism, food and cannibalism.

Abject Bodies and the Consumption of the Primitive.

One of Theroux's crucial problems in the text is that of articulating his disgust with his desire for the primitive Pacific into something palatable. Bhabha addresses this type of "problem":

> the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference - sexual or racial. Such an articulation becomes crucial if it is held that the body is always simultaneously (if conflictually) inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire and the economy of discourse, domination and power. (67).

Theroux's distaste for the heterogeneous, miscegenated Pacific, "spoiled" by contact, cannot be separated from his own desire. His recurrent focus on doom and death, represented as effects of colonial "domination and power", is somewhat ironically prefigured by the title of the book and a search for an essentialized, "pleasurable" primitive Pacific for the author to consume. This search is continually complicated, however, by contradictory models of primitiveness, race and sexuality, and the juxtaposition of the spoiling influence of modernity. In particular, an image of prelapsarian "happy savages" has attracted any number of real or imagined exploitative "beachcombers" to the Pacific, jumping ship from the perceived ills of Western society for the implicit benefits of simple and often sensual pleasures. The

primitive Pacific is idealised as a balm or corrective antidote to the ills of Western modernity, in the romantic tradition of the penetrative discursive history that Theroux reiterates.

Theroux's romanticised focus on primitivism, contained especially within the "spoiling" of an essential or authentic Pacific that he presents, does not, however, hide the complicit taste for the exotic which reveals Theroux as just another consumer. In Rod Edmond's view,

> the Romantic traveller is stuck with a static and essentialized idea of the cultures he attempts to exoticize.... Theroux's late-twentieth-century disgust is the direct descendant of Enlightenment and Romantic wonder, making explicit the disenchantment which always shadowed its rapture. (266).

Theroux's desire to replicate the "rapture" of a beachcomber narrative in his own life is complicated by his attempts to differentiate himself from a mass of other beachcombers (increasingly parodied as tourists) and the resultant despoiling of this impulse. His quest for the "happy isles", expresses a desire to escape the everyday disappointments of a failing marriage and a possible melanoma that is mapped from the scale of his own body, onto the mirror of a Pacific topography. Theroux wilfully associates the "misleadingly sonorous name 'melanoma'" with "Melanesia, The Black Islands," (3): a connection that complicates his corporeal transportation and transcription with allusions to disease and a history of racial (and moral) iconography. The possibility of isolation and escape (from disease and the betrayal of his own body) is thus prefiguratively challenged by traces of previous discourses that have already "infected" the map of the Pacific. Escape is further limited to comparative reflections when fellow travellers are projected as bringing the ills of civilisation with them. Thus when the intrepid adventurer, Theroux, camps out on a small Tongan islet, his rendition of a Robinson Crusoe fantasy is complicated by discovering

footprints everywhere (although these turn out to be his own) and then a blight of yachties moored off a nearby cove (425).

Theroux's fantasy of solipsism, however, soon gives way to a mapping of his body on top of another. The initial scaling of "escape" figuratively presenting a conflation between Theroux's body and a larger map reflects this. He is somewhat disturbed by finding this personalised space inhabited by other bodies, but soon engages in outward speculation, representing his own body as a mirror, in a manner contiguous with a colonial desire for and fascinations with native bodies. This desire is complicated by different versions of bodies, and reactions to different "authentic" aspects of culture previously attributed by colonial discourse. In this, the allure of the "exotic" is evident, signalled by an "interest" in the culturally different that "is sensually and sexually charged; the foreign is feminised and regarded voyeuristically" (Thomas, "Damned," 46). With obvious exotic and erotic sightings on Pacific peoples, Theroux displays both a vested and unvested interest: a fetishisation that Teaiwa finds typical of a Western resignification of the locals for the purpose of leisure, particularly sexual in nature, which "mystifies" other historical and cultural significance (Teaiwa, "Bikini). Reflecting this, the relative beauty of the female locals in various islands is often remarked upon, recreating a "Sotadic Zone" of the South for Theroux to engage in sexual acts of voyeurism and (hinted at) fornication (Phillips 73). Within this zone, this relativity of beauty acts as a kind of scenic diversionary tactic that offers a display of the author's desire and disgust, and, while displacing more intimate encounters, consolidates the eye as the potent organ of possession. The "sharp perception" accorded Theroux is thus more than a signification of apparent intellectual acumen, but also a token of masculine control of

the view. The emphasis on the eye's agency also places in the foreground the significance of others' pens.

In the shifting speculation of his gaze, Theroux's roving eye (and other parts) often seems intertextual, and he certainly locates some of his own observations into a "tradition" by the quotation of Cook and Bougainville, Gauguin and Melville, and Malinowski. Part of the exotic mystique of the South Seas' fantasy, after Bougainville and Diderot, has been its construction as an erotic location. Indeed, the history of Western travel writing, and its erotic, orientalising gaze seems concentrated into the vision and prose of horny French sailors. For Theroux, staring at the beautiful women of French Polynesia re-evokes the historical mythology of "a paradise of fruit trees, brown tits and kiddie porn" (491). Theroux's experience, somehow mistaking a pair of nude sunbathers on a raft for victims of a shipwreck and paddling to their rescue in his own "outrigger canoe", appears to be a slightly altered re-enactment of "the nameless Tahitian girl on Bougainville's ship [who] dropped her flimsy cloth in full view of the impressionable sailors" (491). For Bougainville, the event is said to have engendered multiple interconnected mythologies of uncorrupted savages and provided a *concrete* Venus Aphrodite of the South Pacific, and is blamed for the feminised commodification of the locals in the writing mill of the West of which Theroux is but a late addition (501). This type of historical colonising gaze is compounded by other activities. The view of beauty is precursory to its exploitation, something that Theroux denigrates while also re-enacting. As Theroux himself suggests, previous "exploitative" texts and their authors provide guidance in these lower latitudes (525). Influence can be noted in forbears like Melville, depicted through his character Tommo, "swimming and frolicking with island girls", and more singularly the specular representation of his love-interest Fayaway, standing nude and

totemic in their little boat (524). Gauguin also is a literary and sexual predecessor who found a muse and his own "Fayaway" in Tahiti: "[h]er name was Tehaamana and she was thirteen...; and Gauguin painted her over and over until she became the embodiment of his South Seas fantasy" (551). Gauguin not only depicted her visually in paintings, however. In his diary, *Noa Noa,* he takes possession of his new wife through the narrative of an eye roving over her appearance:

> the old woman returned, followed by a tall young girl carrying a small parcel. Through her excessively transparent dress of pink muslin the golden skin of her shoulders and arms could be seen. Two nipples thrust out firmly from her chest. Her charming face appeared different from the others I had seen on the island up to the present, and her bushy hair was slightly crinkled. In the sunshine an orgy of chrome yellows, I found out that she was of Tongan origin. (Gauguin 33).

As reflected upon earlier, Gauguin's radical version of primitivism exists concurrently with the scopic drive of the exoticist, present in naturalising and possessive assertions of desire. Theroux's vision can hardly be attributed a similar strength of appetite for radicalism or sexual predation. Yet, based on how he presents himself in the text, the bourgeois *flaneur* of the twentieth century continues the sexually charged exoticist focus of previous travellers. Following in the footsteps of Malinowski, he travels to the Trobriands and queries the locals about their sexual practices: especially those revolving around the celebrated yam festival. This festival, which just so happens to coincide with Theroux's trip, seems to consist of a female initiated sexual free-for-all. The author comments that this "sounds like traditional fun", before shaping it towards Western accommodation by quoting the (unsourced) Romantic idyll of Tennyson: "I will take some island woman, she shall rear my dusky race" (150). Ironically, it becomes apparent that Theroux has taken this poetic advice literally when, despite

maintaining that he "was nearly always a model of rectitude", he contracts a venereal malady.

Despite travelling in a "Sotadic Zone" where others might "contest contemporary constructions of sexuality" (Phillips 70),[16] Theroux nonetheless reconstructs sex as just another agent of doom in the Pacific. Implicit in his own activities is a reengagement with the South Seas as a predatory ground for Western tourists, while celebrating the trope of infection and degeneration, miscegenation and hybridity that are the lamented results. Theroux's sexual consumption of natives is a figurative case of criticising-your-cake-and-eating-it-too.

Reconstituting Past Meals

Likewise, the fascination with supposedly cannibal cultures, particularly the exciting meeting with abject, muddy natives in Melanesia, is complicated by a dubious connection with food. Largely ignoring the colonial history of control implicated in imported foodstuffs, and their repercussions on the health of the locals, Theroux bizarrely states a case for the connection between an islander appetite for canned spam or corned beef with the persistent taste buds of a cannibal past:

> It was a theory of mine that former cannibals of Oceania now feasted on Spam because Spam came the nearest to approximating the porky taste of human flesh. 'Long pig' as they called a cooked human being in much of Melanesia. It was a fact that the people-eaters of the Pacific had all evolved, or perhaps degenerated, into Spam-eaters. And in the absence of Spam they settled for corned beef, which also had a corpsy flavour.

The stance of this extract immediately dehistoricizes the economic and political intervention present in the "choice" of Spam and corned-beef as valued foodstuffs, simplifying it as a matter chiefly of "taste", and also presents a naturalised argument

[16] Arguing such a position for Burton.

of genetic determinism in its language of "evolution" and "degeneration" (which will be re-examined below against the consideration of Sacks). Similarly, the dubious nature of this "theoretical" connection seems to overlook a greater level of consumptive reciprocity by Westerners in the narrative of cannibalism. Theroux, in displaying a fascination verging on gullibility in lapping up the third-hand rumours of gnawed human bones and dubious reputations of people-eating pasts, follows a long tradition in travel-writing of Western consumption of the *sign* of cannibalism as an exciting (and diversionary) component in a project of disenfranchisement. Although he scoffs at Melville "practis[ing] a little cannibalism himself in writing [*Typee*], by hacking out and serving raw and still bleeding many passages and incidents from other writers who had published eye-witness accounts" (524), Theroux also consumes and regurgitates the stories of others unconfirmed by any personal sightings. By rendering natives as "cannibal", travelling Western discourses recreate them as commodities for the (figurative) consumption by empire, whether they be situated as a geographically distant, or culturally differentiated setting (Motohashi 97-9). The sign of cannibalism has proven useful in any number of situations of belittlement and appropriation, as evident in its application in historical propaganda dealing with troublesome Irish rebels or in the contemporary tourism of Papua New Guinean Highlanders (Motohashi 97-9). Theroux's interview with the king of Tonga is a particularly strong reflection of this consuming desire for the cannibal. In the lead-up, Theroux cites Noel Coward's comment on seeing "vast" Queen Salote's "tiny retainer": "her lunch" (361). Although Theroux seems to be at pains to distance himself from a similarly superficial treatment of her son, the current monarch, the "irrelevance" of his weight is contradicted not just by the "weight" of importance

given by quoting other guidebooks, but also by his own description. Taufa'ahau Tupou, as depicted, is

> vast, he was slow, an enormous shuffling man whose heavy-lidded eyes and whopper jaw gave him the frog-like face you sometimes saw on ancient carved Polynesian tikis. A tiki is a statue, but Tiki is also a god - greatest in Oceania. A suggestion of divinity is attached to the Tongan monarch, as it is to the English one. Tonga was a kingdom of big men and this man was the biggest of all - you would have known instantly that he was the king... the king of cannibals and coconuts, regal in a distinctly physical sense. (386-7).

Theroux insists that his "king of cannibals and coconuts" has an undeniably presence, an intelligence and authority that are palpable in the depicted interview, yet in his rendering of physical detail, Theroux is not merely "overwhelmed by the King's size" (386). The physical presence of the King is made primitive, notable in the presentation of "blunt" hands unable to separate pages in a book, but even more sustained (and topical) in the "deformed" mouth that consumes its own words. Theroux characterises the king's speech in his production of "a mashed-potato word. It stayed in his mouth, it had no echo, it was a swallowing sound" (393). Although on one level this "character" is reproduced as an equal to Theroux, evident in the informed answers related in the interview (with Theroux, at times, the recipient of a history lecture), the undercurrent of narrative creates a primitive. Contained in the metaphor of distorted eating is a distorted physicality and authority that paradoxically belittles the king. Taufa'ahau Tupou's depiction presents an appetite for too much food, his own words, and, tacitly, his subjects: both those of the interview and his people (as "cannibal king").

Similarly, the "naturally" abject condition of the primitive is exciting to Theroux yet also postulated as negative. A number of racist generalised

characteristics are claimed. Confronted by "rude" locals, Theroux makes a rough cultural and historical connection to "traditional ill-nature": "[a]ll explorers in the Pacific, from Abel Tasman in 1642 onward, had to confront thievery, silliness, aggression, greed, and rapacity." (446) Of course, Theroux fails here to draw attention to the reciprocal (and possibly more warranted) recognition of these features in the natives' view of these explorers. Possibly more revealing though, is the way this functions as an example of placing racist commentary into the mouths of others. Even though it is obviously a rather petty reaction to the immediate situation of having a number of items stolen in Tonga, Theroux makes an essentialist point "validated" by assertions of economic dependency on remittances, and the "scam" of selling citizenship to monied foreigners (360). Connected to "natural" thievery, he also postulates "a lazy sort of boredom... tak[ing] possession of [his] soul, the Oceanic malaise" (465). Coupled with a disinterest in intellectual or commercial pursuits he claims a Polynesian lack of "wit". This is, of course, thoroughly proven by a failure of the locals to appreciate his sense of humour. Examples of this are offered: "Ever read Descartes?... as in don't put Descartes before the horse [or] I'm pink therefore I'm spam?" (465-6). What is apparent to this reader, instead, is a polite embarrassment in the locals' reaction to such, quickly changing the subject to the weather or family concerns, and displaying an inversion of the opposition between civilised and primitive.

Other-Consuming Primitives

A similar inversion of these traits of the contradictory primitive, both desirable and disgusting, is to be had in a careful reading of cultural primitives other than "natives". A number of contacts with nominal Westerners are pervaded with aspects

of savagery, coarseness or simplicity that mark them out as either abject bodies of ridicule or naivety: "tourists" in the field that ultimately reflects back on their use to deflect or parrot the perceptions of the narrator. In particular, the presence of white Australians and New Zealanders in the Pacific is characterised by many judgements of taste. The casual racism presented in Theroux's portrait of Australia sets up a stereotype of a white, drunken bigotry that must prove ironic in consideration of his sales there. The "picturesque mockery" of White Australia for prospective immigrants is included (with some apparent relish) in an extensive list of racist labels: "'refujews'... 'dingbats', 'eyetoes,' spiggoties,' and 'spagies'... 'pig islanders'... 'poms,' 'pommies' or 'pongos'... 'chinks'... 'canaries,' dinks,' and 'chow-chows'... 'yanks' or 'yank wogs'... [as distinguished from the real] 'wog wogs'. (32) In contrast, Theroux's equivalence of white and Aboriginal bathers in the "Woop Woop" (at different water-holes), with the spreading sunblock on faces reminiscent of "Aboriginal body paint" (78), is a levelling of distinctions between the two groups which concurrently elevates Theroux in his position as observer. His quotation of the race relations of the country (mediated substantially through the writing of whites like Patrick White, and Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout*) highlights the barbarity of white Australians, later revisited by the reported antics of a busload of drunken Australian rugby players on tour. Yet the depiction of Aborigines does little to dispel myths of "bludging" and barbarity (the Aboriginals of Northern Queensland "were suspected of being cannibals" [89]). Likewise, the white New Zealand introduction to its Pacific Islanders displays a shift from personal, "objective" observations ("*you* might think: They all come from Fatland", emphasis added) to an overwhelming bigotry in local judgements (Polynesians as gang members, fat, lazy, tattooed, violent, religious - dying out [7-8]).

This narrative distancing is an ironically convenient prolepsis introducing what become the apparent sentiments of the author, but in combination with other cursory observations Theroux effectively snubs white New Zealand as undeveloped, primitive: "life is elsewhere", "a bungaloid place", "second-hand and small and seedy, ill-suited and mediocre" (9-13),. Those New Zealanders encountered in the rest of the Pacific (with the exception of David Lange and Kiri Ti Kanawa) are tourist-colonisers and uneducated evangelists, painfully inferior to the local primitives. In particular, Dame Cath Tizard is singled out (in what Theroux himself refers to as a "vicious little portrait") as a primitive, combining her crass eating habits, (shovelling food into her mouth with her thumb, then picking her teeth as she talks), and boorish language ("I once called a man a fuckwit - Of course I didn't apologise- he was a fuckwit") with an exploitative relationship with the Pacific. New Zealand and Australia are primitive in their connections of tourism, mini-imperialistic political and economic meddling with the islands, all metaphorically expressed in the quasi-cannibalistic bites of capitalist interest that recreates the Pacific as a market and a neo-imperial realm of dependency. In contrast, although Theroux bemoans the ugliness and demise of traditional values in American Samoa, the large cash injection by the United States (over "seventy-five million dollars" annually) is presented as benevolent, and the subversion of the local culture is due to its own nature as a "kleptocracy":

> indeed... in their own pot-bellied way the islanders are very happy... hoggishly contented... when Samoans have their backs to the wall they put on a *lava-lava* and pretend to be islanders. The rest of the time - it seemed to me - they were fat jolly people, with free money, having a wonderful time. (472-3)

Again, Theroux displays a racist tactic of infantilising Pacific Islanders as bludgers and delinquents, happy in their own "choice" of colonialism's various handouts.

Under the Influence.

This sampling and categorising of regional influence displays a collection of the symbolic and "real" maps that Theroux, as modernist literary tourist, relies upon to navigate the Pacific. This process of referentiality to previous texts and previous maps in the construction of the authors' travelogues (most notable in the use of a mid-nineteenth century map to navigate Tongan islands) reflects the process that de Certeau charts in literary voyaging: progress through the voyage is reliant on an historical re-accounting of previous voyaging narrative. In this way, a "map" is crucial to the circumscription and circumnavigation of place and narrative progress, and the voyage represents a touristic review of the stockpile of received (and already narrated) knowledge (de Certeau, *Heterologies* 138-48). While the maps thus created may appear realistic and current to a Western eye, this mode of representation has a specific, colonial genealogy, imbued with specific histories of contact and perspective. The very nomination of the "Pacific" infers the placidity of the ocean and its cultures, creating a *passive* space on a map and one that is available for Western reflections. Theroux plays on notions of void and reflection that impart a sense of alien distance, and untenable scale, when he provides a graphic description of the region:

> More than an ocean, the Pacific was like a universe, and a chart of it looked like a portrait of the night sky. This enormous ocean was like the whole of heaven, an inversion of earth and air, so that the Pacific seemed like outer space, an immensity of emptiness, dotted with misshapen islands that twinkled like stars, archipelagos like star clusters, and wasn't Polynesia a sort of galaxy? (4).

Although a (very strained) connection could be made with the Polynesian skill of celestial navigation, the emphasis on "emptiness" and "misshapen islands" distances their populations and interconnections, while making a stronger connection to

Theroux's Western forbears in the region: Melville. A parallel could also be made with the voiding action of presenting a celestial distance in this mapped "Pacific" and the existence of another Sea of Tranquillity, on the Moon. Although he rhapsodises later in the book on the special state of islands; on their element of romantic mystery, on how the "magical" surrounding element of water appears nothing and yet provides both a barrier and an escape route to elsewhere, and how impossible it is to "possess" an island; the "monarch of all you survey" trope that he dismisses as a "mainland conceit" is nonetheless present in his ideological, and nostalgic, mapping (697). His Pacific is a particularly well-charted one in colonial history: at once perceived at a mythic distance, with the conflation of the distant past and a remote and primitivised spatial present (hence the naming of Australia and the Solomon Islands is a recognition of classical and Christian mythologizing [Rennie 1]) and yet the daunting perceived emptiness of the ocean and the fragile life of the islands (to European eyes, at least) is matched by the robust endeavour of charting the multiple contacts made with the several waves of European travellers: explorers, whalers, traders, adventurers, missionaries, settlers (Edmond 1-12). The type of information contained by such maps reflects on the different acts of consumption of place and resources identifiable with diverse (if interlocking) projects. Theroux is implicated in an imposition and over inscription of Eurocentric history that deterritorialises the local in favour of an Imperial schema, yet he attempts to distance himself even from this connection by presenting the empty stellar metaphor which he returns to later. At the end of his book, observing the aftermath of the eclipse, Theroux may negate his own, personal sense of lack by realising desire (kissing a stranger in the dark) and asserting the possibility of being "home" in the act, yet this is a pretty empty gesture against the greater emptiness of "black sun" over Hawaii. This *dark star* renders the Pacific as an

entropic, cold constellation, an empty background on which to play out "fear and uncertainty" and blindness affecting the realisation of the West's future (733).[17] The local is thereby rendered as merely a dark mirror for studying the West.

In Theroux's *The Happy Isles of Oceania,* the Pacific is treated as a text for a Modernist project, symbolically mapping both the desire for and disgust of the primitive in a process of "intense nostalgia" that naturalises the Pacific "exotic" as a complementary image for the West (22). Theroux's project of navigating and narrating the primitive, voyaging and viewing the "happy isles," is dependant on (a)voiding the local by an over-inscription that serves Western interests. His dwelling on palagi subjects affects a continual conversion narrative: recreating a mirror for the West by converting the local features into mere reflections of Western concerns, dreams and nightmares. The cultural narcissism of such a project is evidence of the persistence of colonialism in the region, and the willed obscuring of cultural histories that reside beyond the frame of the West's mirror.

Sacks and Drugs: Pacific Pathologies.

While Theroux can be observed as a writer highly dependent on a possessive, romantically nostalgic mode of observation and discourse, both desiring and disgusted with the Pacific, Oliver Sacks deals with some similar concerns in a very different style, and to quite different ends. Although some intimations of romantic symbolism appear in Sacks' text, these are generally ironised and complicated by the inclusion of experiences and cultural histories that challenge easy reflection. Understandably, a chief area where the difference in their narrative strategies is manifest is in the

[17] The importance of this symbolism must be recognised through Theroux's recent repetition of this phrase in a book title.

mapping of the health of the Pacific. Theroux dwells on the destructive features of contact through romantic metaphors of savagery and desire, emphasising the multiple dooms of war, religion, disease and miscegenation on a Pacific population too simple to be able to resist the fatal impact of contact with the West; Sacks, although not without a moral and emotional dimension, presents himself as more systematically meticulous in examining the material and cultural conditions of islanders, imploding the foundation of pseudo-scientific speculation common to Pacific travel writing and primitivism generally. In doing so, Sacks displays an awareness of the available complexity in the personal and historical observations of Micronesian peoples and their environment, while also pointing out some of the limitations of scientific discourse, and its own systemisation of desire. His use of authorising systems of scientific observation and narration legitimate a project of imagination in the Pacific that extends beyond the range of Theroux's vision, displaying not only an awareness of natives' "looking back", but also a desire to gain some understanding of what is seen from this perspective.

Where Theroux is an aestheticized travel-writer and novelist, individuating the representation of knowledges and experience, Sacks, the compassionate scientist, is at once more dispersed in his observations and yet more observably organised in his writings. Sacks' presents himself as being "open" in his gaze, yet bringing his background as a scientist and medical practitioner to bear on his writing, he founds his text on collective, cumulative practices of scientific and "natural historic" observation that emphasise the professionalism and rational organisation of his narrative. In opposition to Theroux's seemingly prejudged nostalgic disgust, Sacks presents his experience of travel as generally unplanned:

> my visits to these islands were brief and unexpected, not part of any programme or agenda, not intended to prove or disprove any thesis, but simply to observe. But if they were impulsive and unsystematic, my island experiences were intense and rich, and ramified in all sorts of directions which continually surprised me. (xiii)

This depiction of an "unsystematic" practice is supported by an inclusion of several recognised disciplinary domains sampled and catalogued in Sacks' production of possible knowledges. As Sacks states:

> I went to Micronesia as a neurologist, or neuroanthropologist, intent on seeing how individuals and communities responded to unusual endemic conditions - a hereditary total colour-blindness in Pingelap and Pohnpei; a progressive, fatal neurodegenerative disorder in Guam and Rota. But I also found myself riveted by the cultural life and history of these islands, their unique flora and fauna, their singular geological origins. If seeing patients, visiting archaeological sites, wandering in rainforests, snorkelling in the reefs, at first seemed to bear no relation to each other, they then fused into a single unpartitionable experience, a total immersion in island life. (xiii)

The depiction of his gaze as multifaceted yet "unpartitionable" is consistent with the stated desire, "simply to observe". As well as his own professionally specialised knowledge, neurology, he travels extensively through discourses of science. Some of his forays include snorkelling through the marine biology of coral and fresh-water jellyfish; revisiting genetic history via optics and H. G. Wells, deafness and Martha's Vineyard; traipsing a botanical trail through primordial cycad forests; and in geological assays to the origins of atolls. By accessing scientific discourses, he also journeys through theories in the disciplines of geography, history and anthropology. While he acknowledges that any one of these discourses expresses its own limitations as part of its "expert" focus, the combination of knowledges provides a considerable coverage in the representation of his experiences and of the local conditions observed.

The inference in this practice must be that the more variegated the parts of the narrative, the more they represent the complexity and "richness" of, and totality of the "immersion" into, island life.

To an extent, then, this presentation of unordered travels is misleading. Sacks presents a sample of discourses as parts of a whole experience. The expeditionary nature of the trip to Pingelap and Pohnpei, with several members and an accompanying documentary television crew suggests considerable planning and the necessity of an, at least, rudimentary "mission" (xvi). This Sacks confirms in his assessment of the trips as medically focussed (xiii). However, it is in the combination of the visions peripheral to this chief focus, in the process of recollection and writing, which he engages with the contradictory organisation of the text, and travel in general. As Sacks admits:

> [in the] active process of recatergorization - of reconstruction, of imagination, determined by our own values and perspectives - ... remembering has caused me to reinvent these visits, in a sense, constructing a personal idiosyncratic, perhaps eccentric view of these islands, informed in part by a lifelong romance with islands and island botany. (xiv)

Sacks confirms the prefigurement of form in experience. In the writerly reorganisation and resignification of experience he can never "simply observe" without his "own values and perspectives" being brought to bear. Reflecting this, the narrative construction of his "romance with islands" also displays his professional training as a scientist in the qualities of his observation, and the predominant reference to and mediation of scientific discourses suggests a highly organised narrative. Yet the very structured nature of support, which validates the factual, scholarly nature of Sacks' text, also emphasises the polyvocal practice of consultation

and reliance on other sources that opens the work beyond the scope of a personal, into a communal touristic gaze.

Science Infliction.

.Sacks' narrative is divided into two case studies, two separate books, two different localities in Micronesia, and two different "problems" addressed. The domain of the narrative is, ostensibly, consideration and exploration of these two Pacific maladies in a mode of observation that engages predominantly with a "touristic gaze" concentrated on natural history (Macnaghten and Urry 119). The first book gives a particular twist to the conception of the gaze, and gives the title for the whole: "The Island of the Colour-blind". In this part, Sacks deals primarily with communities on, and from, the island of Pingelap, a high proportion of whom display the "maskun": a congenital achromatopsia that is extremely rare in most other parts of the world. Congenital achromatopsia is a hereditary condition of total colour-blindness, coupled with a "far more disabling ... painful hypersensitivity to light and poor visual acuity" (10). The practice of observation is not entirely a matter for clinical disinterestedness though; it is also made ambiguous and turned in on itself by Sacks' reveries on the nature of sight, sensory compensations, and desire to comprehend the view of colour-blind eyes. The other part of the text is also concentrated on local, Micronesian insights. The second book, titled "Cycad Island", is set in Guam and its sister island, Rota, which is the site of a complex of diverse neurological disorders known locally as "lytico-bodig". This malady is mysterious in origin and progression, despite intense international scholarly attention, afflicting the sufferers in a number of ways, from progressive paralysis to dementia.

The textual treatment of these conditions reveals a clinical "desire" at work alongside a fascination with everyday relations. The unique factors of the isolation and containment of these islands make for a particularly valuable site of study, a delimited social laboratory where the pool of subjects is small and the chances of isolating a cause is high. However, although these conditions are interesting enough in themselves, they function largely as a portal into consideration of Pacific possibilities on a larger scale and the construction of a more flexible narrator. In his role as the internationally renowned neurologist, Sacks sees the two different sites as unique opportunities to understand pathologies that share traits with other conditions that he has previously encountered. Yet beyond fashioning himself as an "expert" in the empirical-clinical tradition, he brings his own experience into consideration in activities of historical reverie and pseudo-magical tricks learnt from similar case studies that partially obviate the clinical sources and tone in his discourse. This is demonstrated particularly well when he is able to shock the surrounding medical staff at a local hospital in Guam, by encouraging a patient of limited motor-control to a surprising act of physicality:

> With a conspiratorial wink to [the patient] Euphrasia, I said to John, 'I'll show you something - or Euphrasia will.' I managed, with some difficulty, to get her to her feet. Walking backward in front of her, holding her gnarled hands, cueing her all the time, I was able to guide her, with tiny, tottering steps, to the garden just outside. There was a rock garden in the form of a little hill, with irregular ledges and slopes. 'OK,' I said to Euphrasia, pointing to a rock, 'climb over this, you're on your own - go!' To John's horror, and the nuns', I took my hands off her, and let her go. But Euphrasia, who had been almost incapable of movement on the flat, featureless floor of the dayroom, lifted her leg high, and stepped boldly over the rock, and then over another one, and another, up to the top of the rock garden, without difficulty. she smiled, and climbed down

> again, as surefootedly as she had gone up. As soon as she reached the level ground, she was as helpless as before. John looked rather stunned at this, but Euphrasia still had a ghost of a smile on her lips - she was not in the least surprised at all. (165)

The entertainment value present in such a revelation of "insider-knowledge" is clear in its dramatic re-enactment. Although the "trick" is dependent on knowledge gained from previous clinical observation, its performance and the narration that re-performs it for the readers' benefit establishes a methodology that is both gently farcical and magical in its production. Sacks sets up the situation, with details of the characters present, the incapacity of the patient and the physical environment, and then leads the reader through the event in a manner that echoes the "cueing" of the patient. While the telling of the story functions to establish a rapport and trust with the author, implicit in the "conspiratorial wink" given to the patient, the narrative also mirrors the displays of "magic" technology used by early explorers to impress authority on natives. The story functions to confirm Sacks' role as a similarly authoritative guide through specialised, medical history, smoothing out the connections between compelling scholarship, the narration of the "everyday" and performance of the miraculous.

The construction of the text, with its associative, anecdotal connections, yet thoroughly endnoted with scholarly asides and references, and an impressive bibliography, blends layers of popular and specialist travel-reading in a manner that makes Theroux's production of the Pacific comparatively two-dimensional. The depth of Sacks' own readership is offered as part of the travel experience, but in such a manner that the "aura" of expertise is maintained without unduly interrupting a good story. However, Sacks also constructs himself with a degree of naiveté that implicates the reader in the accumulation of his expertise. For example, when Sacks is first presented with the story of climbing snakes, shorting the power supply and

decimating the bird population of Guam, he is unsure whether to treat it as a joke (173-5). The assessment of this case as factual shows the process of expanding his experience through contact and sharing of discourse with others. Unlike Theroux's monological and selective quotation of previous authors, Sacks' fuller referencing and engagement in dialogue provides the reader with a sense of how Sacks constructs himself and his opinions, allowing for the more transparent display of mediation in the relationship between his sources and his readers. Sacks constructs a position of some humility for himself by emphasising his indebtedness to specialists in the fields he forays into throughout the text, and attributing their knowledges, to an extent, into an intertextual, shared authorship. In this way, knowledge of the ecological imbalance of Guam, represented by the snakes' invasion and depredation, is shared between John Steele's presentation in dialogue with the author, and Sacks revealing subsequent reading of David Quammen's research (279-80).

The first part of the book is also informed by the exotic desire to view a rare condition, and relive childhood fantasies stimulated by migraine auras, science fiction, and later, clinical experience of colour-blindness. His personal recollection of temporary colour loss, coupled with clinical observations of a visually-amnesiac inform his reading of H. G. Wells' "Country of the Blind" (6-8). The ensuing curiosity is exposed as a partly exoticist drive towards finding a situation where communal colour-blindness presents something different, rather than a loss. Seemingly, this desire is exposed in the use of sketches throughout and what he perceives as the "heightened reality" hinted at in the work of great black and white photography. Likewise, the personal, anecdotal form of the narrative displays a yearning for encounters with the miraculous, which engender expeditions "at once neurological, scientific and romantic" (14). The consequential encounters are

presented as compassionate rather than purely clinical. He feels privileged to be accepted, as an outsider, into local customs and lore.

This acceptance, and the resulting compassionate tone of his address, is reliant on his connection to special insider-outsider figures. An instance of this occurs in Pingelap, where the Norwegian achromatope, Knut, assures a special connection with and acceptance from a community that acknowledges his own affliction with the "maskun", and proves invaluable in convincing locals of strategies and tools with which to combat some of its detrimental effects (76). The cultural relativism at work proving his worth as such an insider-outsider is emphasized by the myth-making that surrounds Knut (61). Similarly, on Guam, fellow neurologist, and long-term resident, John Steele, has an established a relationship of trust with the local Chamorros, acknowledged as a valuable member of the community (152). The importance of this is noted in the contrast with other Western doctors, whom, the Chamorros feel, have been given "their stories, their time, their blood and finally their brains - often feeling that they themselves are no more than specimens or subjects." (152)

However, although the activities of many doctors and researchers are displayed as representing a colonialism that is interested in disease and the communities effected in terms of clinical knowledge, this cultural imperialism is a useful history for Sacks. The scientific methodologies of Sacks' narrative allow a reconsideration of the moral conception of cultural "contact". The role of colonialism is explored as having a more complex role in Pacific disease than is maintained by Theroux. The "fatal impact" trope of Theroux is re-examined more meticulously in particular case studies both within and without the two main conditions explored.

Flawed Fatalities.

The discussion of fatal impacts discussed in connection with Theroux elides some strong scientific material supporting the "inevitability" of annihilation. Isolation is put forward as a chief contributing factor in the apparently impotent resistance of islanders. As Alfred Crosby sets out in his thesis of Western expansion, *Ecological Imperialism* (1986), microbial, vegetable and animal agents greatly aided in European conquest and control of environments susceptible to damage. Crosby argues that areas like the Pacific were vulnerable to biological invasion due to the lack of defences caused by long separation from the biological interchanges present in larger landmasses. Through an essentially Darwinian argument of "natural selection", he portrays the large and competitive Eurasian storehouse of "ills", "weeds", and "pests" as devastating in their effects when let lose upon certain, receptively "simple" environments (286-7).

Pathogens are notable in the devastations of the early encounters in Oceania. Although Europeans initially denied their culpability, introduced afflictions such as smallpox, measles, and venereal diseases decimated island populations. In an article published in 1990, David Stannard, attempting to address a projected population decline that seems scarcely believable to some of his past and present colleagues, posits the multiple, cumulative and often hidden effects of successive waves of "virgin soil" epidemics (329). Citing Henry Dobyns' controversial estimations of population decline in the Americas, a pathogenic decimation of "holocaust" proportions that signals germs as "the true shock troops with which the Old World battered the New" (Dobyns 24),[18] Stannard provides compelling proof for a demographic depopulation of similarly staggering proportions in the Pacific. Looking

at the case of Hawai'i, relatively well-documented by explorers, traders, and especially missionaries, Stannard finds a decrease from a 1778 population of at least 800,000 to a "pure Hawaiian population... less than 8,000 and still declining," in the early 1990s (336). The cause for this marked "free-fall" in numbers, he argues, is not just from immediate epidemic deaths, but "the result *primarily* of infertility and subfecundity arising from the disease, stress, and malnutrition that followed in the wake of the Europeans" (328).

Although Sacks concedes that "Western diseases have had a disastrous effect on the native populations of the Pacific" (257), some of the stresses in this material suggest that despite the decline, and in some cases outright extinction, of populations, these factors are not "inevitable". Nor are these factors universal in their effects. The moral ambivalence of biological determinism ignores a greater complexity of exchange, resistance and continuity in populations, and the possibility of representing miscegenation as a history of (albeit ambivalent) survival rather than complete doom. Stannard's figures for the part-Hawaiian population of the early 1990s "exceeds 200,000" (336), revealing the assumptions of racial "purity" and a conception of "pure" destruction as complicated by mixture, change and adaptation. Colonial contact is uneven and multi-salient, resulting in the mixed health of Oceania.

Primitive Appetites.

Sacks' view of colonialism presents a varied consideration of impacts and exchanges that reflects a changeability dependent on the specificities of encounter. His contrasting examples of colonial and traditional praxis of food and health are particularly indicative of an understanding of uneven contact. Colonial

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[18] Dobyns suggests a rate of decrease between the fifteenth and late nineteenth century of 50:1. Dobyns' study is vulnerable due to the lack of early records, but may, in some critics estimation, be

representations of traditional Pacific habits of eating and hygiene as savage and unclean are useful as grounds for European expansion, physical and ideological, and provide a powerful contrast to edenic depictions of the Pacific. Although nature is valorised in the romantic Western imagination, the representation of *bad* natures also allows for the West's superior stance, of *rationality*, to provide it with the moral impetus to criticise and re-educate nature. Good examples of this tactic are the propaganda evident in earlier colonial advertising material. McClintock's study of the twin advancements of soap manufacture and the British Empire in the nineteenth century, *Imperial Leather* (1995), elucidates a process that denigrates "unwashed natives" while domesticating and deodorising an ideology of purification, encapsulated in the Unilever Company Slogan: "Soap is Civilisation" (Macnaghten and Urry 128). Akin to this is the advertising postcard that depicts Fijians "preparing for a feast", with a community posed sitting behind large mounds of root vegetables and huge turtles lying on their backs. The caption over-writing the picture reads "Dr Sheldon's Digestive Tabules: 'Digest What You Eat'", which blatantly primitivises the occasion, the foodstuffs and the islanders (Stephen 62).[19] Primitivised appetites are most present in the Western mythology of cannibalism. The analogy that Theroux makes between spam-eaters and a man-eating past is quoted as part of Sacks' text (56), but this theory of the "degeneration" of cannibals is ironically left hanging in lieu of proof. Instead, Sacks makes a deadpan statement: "As far as I knew... there was no tradition of cannibalism on Pingelap" (56). Although this statement is appended an endnote that discusses part of the debate on cannibalism in the Pacific, quoting Stevenson and O'Connell (244), this understated humour nevertheless ridicules Theroux. Judging by the inclusions of these accounts, Sacks may be

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overly conservative.

reserved about the existence of anthropophagi rather than openly dismissive like Arens, who suggests a universality of cannibal mythology rather than observed practice (Arens 139). However, to Sacks, the question of cannibalism is of secondary, diversionary significance to the issue of diet itself. Whereas Theroux sensationalises cannibalism in his travels with this reflection on spam or corned-beef, Sacks focuses critically on economic colonialism and its effects to healthy diet. Sacks writes of the traditional diet of taro as a superior source of nutrition, engendering a collective reverence and community employment, and a welcome site of shade for local achromatopes (56-7). In contrast, the figure of economic villainy is observed in the brash character of the corned-beef baron, who sees his profitable export mission, comically, as

> philanthropic, a bringing of sound Western nutrition to benighted natives who, left alone, would eat taro and breadfruit and bananas and fish as they had for millennia - a thoroughly un-Western diet from which, now, they were happily being weaned.... He seemed unaware of the enormous health problems which had come along with a shift to a Western diet after the war. (26)

Citing the theory of peoples with a "thrifty gene" and their propensity to obesity and diabetes when exposed to a Western diet, Sacks compares the fate of Pacific people to that of the Pima Indians: a population divided by the Mexican-United States border. The half living in Mexico, relying on subsistence farming, remain lean and healthy, whereas the combination of a high-fat diet and this "thrifty gene" have resulted in the Arizona Pima having one of the highest rates of obesity and diabetes in the world. Sacks views Oceanic peoples as equally at risk through this manifestation of colonial

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[19] Stephen reproduces and criticises this (c.1900) advertisement, taken from the Powerhouse Museum collection.

contact (234). Set up against this example is another, however, that complicates this denigration of colonialism.

An Exchange of Poisons.

The issue of diet in Guam complicates the representation of traditional and colonial practice as a moral dichotomy. According to Sacks, part of the traditional Chamorro diet could be a prime candidate as the cause of the lytico-bodig, or at least as a major contributing factor.[20] The consumption of the seeds of the cycads may be the sought-after clue to the mysterious affliction. Indeed, although the arrival of the Western diet to the post-war Pacific is presented as generally harmful to people's health, it is contemporaneous with a demographic disappearance of the lytico-bodig condition in Guam. Supporting this theory, evidence shows that the disease is markedly generational in its incidence, with the older sufferers succeeded by healthy generations. One of the mysteries of the condition is its tendency to lie dormant over a long period (apparently highly unusual in a neurotoxin of such ultimate devastation); but, although new cases continue to be observed at the time of Sacks' writing, these are confined to the generation who consumed a pre-Westernised diet. Knowledge of the toxicity of the seeds is demonstrated in the traditional practice of their repeated washing, yet it is their total replacement by a Westernised diet that may be proving most effective. Essentially, it is the disease itself that is dying out, rather than the community that it has been ravaging. Sacks shows that this is particularly striking, as the connection in incidence (propensity and type) is often linked to families, but the communal strength and cultural adaptation of the current generations appears to be consuming the disease and its effects. The exchange of some traditions

for modern practice, then, is presented as crucial for the survival of island communities. In an ironic twist of representation, further supporting evidence for this theory is based upon the known neurotoxic poisoning by these local plants of imported animals. Sacks narrates stories of animal addiction to harmful features in contact environments: by consuming local plant material, the figure of the invading cattle is, itself, consumed by local resistance. Browsing on addictive cycads or zamia bushes can result is a condition known as "neurocycadism", manifest in acute vomiting and diarrhoea, a drunken, "weaving gait", and a final, irreversible paralysis (138-9). The culture of "corned-beef", then, is one which displays a more complex interchange than one solely of one-sided economic or "cannibal" exploitation.[21]

Natural Selections.

Sacks' assessment of the colonial management of the "primitive" islands continues to explore this complex site of exchange. In particular, the discourse of "nature" writing is demonstrated to be in an uneasy relationship to colonial practices and the health of the Pacific. The figuration of "nature" inhabits a determinedly political contact zone, present in ideological symbolism and administrative practice. As Richard Kerridge notes, the supposedly recent political popularity of environmentalism is based on colonial productions and consumptions of nature for its

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[20] Sacks presents this as an unproven hypothesis amongst others, and does not discount the other possible contributing factors studied, such as genetics and other environmental factors (including the possibility of unbalanced trace elements in the water supply).

[21] This complexity is recognised in the work of Pacific artist, Michel Tuffery. His dramatic cow sculptures, constructed out of used *Pacific Corned Beef* cans, represent a new, hybrid celebratory tradition in Pacific art. As Jennifer Hay notes, discussing Tuffery's "Povi Christkeke":

> Tuffery's sculpture echoes the harmful effects of the disposable society and the imposition of alien economics and culture on traditional Pacific island culture. [Yet] while generations of introduced cattle continue to trample Samoa's fragile ecosystem beneath their hooves, the very stuff from which Povi Christkeke emerged - the imported tins of corned beef - has been incorporated into the rituals of feasting and gift-giving and the daily lives of the Pacific Islanders.

The local appropriation and adaptation of colonial materials and practices can be construed, then, as positively influencing the health of Oceania, alongside its detrimental effects.

own purposes (164). In this light, contemporary nature writing is as dependent on histories of anti-conquest cataloguing, opportunistic adventurism and big-game hunting, as a new-found conscience for other lifeforms (Kerridge 164). One of Sacks' early observations seems to reflect this, echoing Theroux's vision of the ocean as an empty, celestial mirror. This vision presents a version of "nature" implacable in the face of human contact, and yet highly dependent on the tradition of human philosophical symbolism in its significance and expression. Sacks notes that he is

> flying, at 27,000 feet, over the trackless vastness of the Pacific. No ships, no planes, no land, no boundaries, nothing - only the limitless blue of sky and ocean, fusing at times into a single blue bowl. This featureless, cloudless vastness is a great relief, and reverie-inducing - but, like sensory deprivation, somewhat terrifying too. The Vast thrills, as well as terrifies - it was well called by Kant 'the terrifying Sublime'. (18)

Although the emphasis is on the "emptiness" of the scene, Sacks reveals his consciousness of the Pacific as being already colonised by a transformative mediation, into the tradition in Western thought of the romantic Sublime. This vision is somewhat augmented and undercut by the appearance of "a tiny, exquisite atoll on the horizon", which turns out to be the notorious Johnston Island (18). The history of colonial contact, up to this point, is quickly assessed by Sacks, displaying a foreshortening of different policies of intervention into the island's "nature". Apparently uninhabited before European discovery, the United States has claimed it for several contradictory roles. Initially economically valuable as a rich source of guano, and then, according to the politics of conservation, as a federal bird reserve, it now exists as a chemically and radioactively contaminated test site and weapons dump for the US Air Force. Meeting the plane is a stair reading "Welcome to Johnston Atoll", yet when Sacks attempts to disembark he is informed that it is an island restricted to military personnel. The workers he observes repairing the aircraft

betray the nature of the "welcome" further: due to the risks associated with exposure to its toxic air, they must wear aluminium protective suits (18-21).

Sacks' continuing, multiply critical focus on the "natural" domain in his travels further emphasises the politics of representation and consumption. In the Caroline Islands, communities' reliance on the land is depicted as vital and yet also fragile. The material and spiritual dependence on crops such as taro, banana, breadfruit and the coconut emphasises the "natural" connection to the landscape, a condition shaped by necessity rather than nostalgia. The production of nature into culture, into food, buildings and boats, and culture into nature, with the burial of the dead back into the land, elicits an admiring response from Sacks (45). Yet the security of this connection is problematic. One storm swamping the atoll of Pingelap exposes the vulnerability of islanders to natural disasters: the low-lying topography gives no protection from a high sea, killing inhabitants outright, stripping and poisoning the island's vegetation, and decreasing the surviving gene pool until the regressive trait for the maskun surfaces as a common condition (41-2). Nevertheless, the sea is also a natural resource of sweeping influence on culture. The dispersal and interchange of island populations over the ocean has led to an incredible and continuing wealth of linguistic and dialectal diversity (amongst other cultural features), displaying an aptitude for change that challenges Theroux's primitive, essential and "natural" languages (239-41). Sacks' own travels over the sea display rich experiences of nature, like fishing at night in phosphorescent waters (62-4), or culture assumed into the "scenic" dimension through the processes of aging. Visiting the foreboding archaeological site of Nan Madol, Sacks is introduced, by local boatman and guide, Robin (70-1) to the "uncanny feeling" of prescence in a nominally dead place. Sacks is conscious of the material presence of nature in the well-weathered basalt structures, but the increasing

understanding of its continuing association of its past oppressive power in the myth and oral folklore of contemporary islanders repeatedly reminds Sacks, "uncannily", of the human history betrayed in its apparent "emptiness" and "desertedness" (66-73). His snorkelling expeditions in Guam also emphasise human agency in the productions of nature. Firstly, swimming in the reefs, he notices the effects of pollution on the coral (144-5), then, seeking to visit a beach on the military base with a Chamorro companion, they again face the restrictions imposed by military colonialism (158).

Political Nature.

Sacks' view of the regulation and dispossession of Guam interrogates notions of "natural" political structure in the traditional and the colonial features of contemporary society, seeking to test the health of its inhabitants as a polity. The political "health" of Sacks' Guam should be examined against other depictions of Pacific "political nature". While Theroux's image of the "absolutist" cannibal culture, embodied in the Tongan King, reveals itself as a caricature divorced from awareness of a history of contact, Sacks' colonial history does bear comparison to both Teaiwa's "militourism," the conflation of touristic practice as a cover for ongoing militaristic colonialism in the Pacific, and Nicholas Thomas' analysis of regimented colonial Fiji. Thomas' suggestion of ambivalent treatment of the "primitive" colonial subject can be seen in the contradictory practices and places of primitivism in British governance of Fiji, "characterised by intense interest in indigenous society and a singularly paternalistic and protective attitude towards it" (Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture* 107). On the one hand, the official policy recognised the "traditional" merits of indigenous society by delegating (some) indirect authority

to the "chiefly system" and establishing the village as the "natural" political and social unit of the natives. In this way, Fijian society is reinvented as a hierarchical entity, both static and yet backward in conception. On the other hand, the colonial authorities intervened in direct and regulatory ways, as evidenced in health and sanitation policy. The huge writerly bureaucracy of Imperial government in Fiji can be sensed in its collection of "trivial" detail, its survey of unhealthy traditional practices, and its programme of "improvements" suggested to halt the population decline of indigenous Fijians (Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture* 113-4).

In Sacks' view, Guam's successive imperial regimes have also left an ambivalent legacy in local culture. Despite the harsh practices of the imperial powers, Chamorro culture has not been reduced to a passive, fatally impacted collection of traditions. According to Sacks, Spanish exploration, missionaries and governance, are responsible for introducing numerous diseases, invasion, a pogrom against resistance, forced religious conversion, miscegenation and a creolised language and culture (146-8). American annexation, Japanese occupation, and American "liberation" followed Spanish rule. Although Sacks stipulates a largely unchanged "way of life" for the locals in the two centuries that followed the initially harsh contacts of Spanish rule and repression (149), suggesting a reasonable degree of cultural resilience, the post-war "Americanisation" of Guam presents an unprecedented degree of change. In the face of wholesale urbanisation, a tenfold increase in population due to the American militarization of the island, and further swells in population due to tourism and (largely Filipino) service immigration, Sacks suggests that the "traditional Chamorro ways of life are dwindling and vanishing, receding to pockets in the remotest southern villages, like Umatac [where his friend and colleague, Steele, is based]" (151).

Yet despite this sounding similar to Theroux's renditions of the "fatal impact" trope, Sacks does not over-romanticise traditional life, and is able to point to local adaptations that signify strong, new forms of Chamorro culture. Just as a local scholar like Vicente Diaz can stress the transcultural survival of the Chamorros in their uniquely hybridised absorption of the colonisers' religion, language and even filmic culture, even to the point of an answering recolonisation (Diaz 362-83),[22] Sacks invests some trust in the place of local herbal and medical knowledge as a rich epistemological source with a desirable role in the training of local doctors, such as Phil Roberto (151-2). Similarly, the movements of the Chamorros from Guam to other parts of the world and back again, leads to the transculturation of the local into the global, and global into local, that challenges the static or backward-looking stereotype of the "naturally" primitive community. While Theroux sees the diasporic experience of Pacific peoples as rendering to "type" (for instance, when he notes that Tongans in the United States are servants, but assume "haughty" airs and graces in their homelands (366)), Sacks presents the traditional periodic emigrations and the cultural and demographic interchange between islands merging with wider travels and transculturation. In the instance of Pohnpei, the large island functions as a host for its satellite islands, with enclaves of population that often outnumber that of the original islands (74-5), and it also provides a base for people like Greg Dever. In Dever's travels in the Peace Corps, he discerned a lack of adequate medical care in Micronesia, trained as a doctor and then returned to his community. In Sacks' account, he is currently applying his knowledge and commitment to local health through the establishment and running of a medical training programme aimed at developing an indigenous involvement throughout the archipelagoes (83-4). These

[22] Diaz produces a strong argument for the survival of Chamorro traditions, religious beliefs and language by hollowing out and displacing the colonisers' discourses with their own.

new relationships seem to offer a hope of balancing some of the limited visions which Sacks observes in Western systemisations of nature.

Sacks as Collector.

Displaying a similar resolve against Western regulation and dispossession of nature, Sacks' botanical fixation on the cycads of Guam and neighbouring Rota may seem to represent a desire for a wild, untamed nature to redress the faults of modernity. Yet, firstly on Guam, and then more fully on the less populated Rota, the prevalence of the cycad forests conjures up a complex reaction and meditations in Sacks' narrative. Even this most "natural" of environments is already colonised by previous narratives. This, as much as any prior part of the text, confirms Sacks' role as a collector: of stories, knowledges and disciplines. One aspect in his fascination with this plant is with its physical presence, in size, shape, and peculiarity, and in its status as an example of biological survivors from a past epoch. This fascination is displayed in his collection of accounts of prior botanists, personal anecdotes, and a local medicine woman and her son. The process of collecting these disparate elements sets up a representation of dialogue between Sacks and his guides. Sacks' romantic histories, dwelling on the figures and tales of various botanical adventurers, have a particularly strong link to memories from his childhood. Formative influences, his mother and aunt, and their inspiration, Marie Stopes, establish a link between familiar (and familial) pasts, with its personal gardens and trips to botanical parks and the Natural History Museum, and to the abstract, botanical sublime (202-9). The study of botany is presented as a way of accessing a vision of the immense time scale and innumerable variations of past life, yet this is intimately tied into the desire to reclaim personal memories. Sacks reveals this connection in his childhood dreams of

> the peaceful, swampy landscapes of 350 million years ago, a Palaeozoic Eden - I would wake with a sense of exhiliration, and loss. I think these dreams, this passion to regain the past, had something to do with being separated form my family and evacuated from London... during the war years. But the Eden of lost childhood, childhood imagined, became transformed by some leger-demain of the unconscious to an Eden of the remote past, a magical 'once', rendered wholly benign by the omission, the editing out of all change, all movement. For there was a peculiar static, pictorial quality in these dreams, with at most a slight wind rustling the trees or rippling the water. (204)

This attraction is applied to those biological oddities surviving from ages, whether it be by cycads or horseshoe crabs, and echoes that of Melville, viewing Galapagos tortoises: "The great feeling inspired by these creatures was that of age - dateless, indefinite endurance. They seemed newly crawled from beneath the foundations of the world." (cited in Sacks, 225) In his trip to Guam and Rota, then, Sacks acknowledges that, to him,

> deep time brings a deep peace with it, a detachment from the timescale, the urgencies, of daily life... [and] an intimate feeling of the antiquity of the earth.... Standing here in the jungle, I feel part of a larger, calmer identity; I feel a profound sense of being at home, a sort of companionship with the earth. (225)

The romantic reverie is coexistent, if not inseparable with the clinical fascination of his vision, where Sacks' can get incredibly excited, recalling the "special enthusiasm" of a previous (Western) botanist, Safford (1905), for "the structure of its inflorescence and the manner of its fructification" (217). The naturalists' enthusiasm for plant sex, although rendered in a specialised language, nevertheless conveys a matching sexualised thrill. Historically, the sexualised discourse of botany can be traced back to the Linnaean culture of systemisation (strikingly vivid in Linnaeus' sexually

charged description of the marsh andromeda [Pratt 26-7]), and has also been noted in the linking of Joseph Banks' scientific observation to his reputed sexual voyeurism (Bewell 181).[23] Sacks, stating his "longing to see this visible act of fecundation [in cycads] for myself [and] pull[ing] out my hand lens and peer[ing] into the male cone, then into the notched ovules, as if the whole drama might be enacted before my eyes" (218), can be seen to engage with this, rather dubious, historical connection between botany and sexual observation, fashioning himself as "voyeur".

With the image of Sacks staring intently at the magnified sexual organs of a cycad, the amused gaze of his local guides seems understandable. For Sacks, their laughter prompts a recollection of how weird he must look, and an engagement with their own historical observation of plants. Initially, he contends that the locals acculturate the cycads, "basically", as a source of food (218), yet this envisioning also reveals an understanding of paralleling poisonous productivity of the plant, a sensual awareness of its features (including its "sexual" heat (216) and visual beauty), and a recognition that they see them as a living record of events. Patterns of growth in the leaves and on the external rings of trunks can be read as an account of historical storms and other environmental conditions, placing natural history within the scope of human experience (211). The living history represented by such local interpretations connects with Sacks' evolutionary insight, commenting on the irony present in the development of a unique species and as ambivalent source of food and disease in human use (223).

Two final anecdotes consolidate this equivocal, travelling view of the cycad. At dusk, Sacks observes two huge cycad seeds floating in the ageless ocean, "nomadic"

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[23] Cook's voyage, ostensibly to study the transit of Venus, ironically gave birth to what a contemporary commentator saw as Banks' "penetrat[ing] into the most secret recesses of nature... [including] amorous descriptions [of] the females of most countries that he has visited, [who] have undergone every critical inspection by him."

encapsulations of space and time on the lapping waves. As he watches, one is washed back onto the shore, but the other continues "like a little ship, on its journey on the high seas." (226) For Sacks, the question of Pacific survival, ecological and cultural, is both as tendentious and robust as this seed, impervious to salt water, yet dependent on the currents and luck to reach a safe haven. In contrast, the other story acts as a reminder of the position this text, its naturalist gaze, and its author, occupy, in the Western traditions of travel: Sacks' fixation on nature draws on anti-conquest narratives in imperial and colonial eras, on its way to indicating the interests of contemporary eco-tourism. The conjoining figures of the well-travelled plant and author align in an awareness of Sacks' naturalist gaze functioning as a tourist vision, confirmed by his attempt to purchase a "souvenir" cycad. Seeking a specimen after his trip, from a nursery in the States and "for a wedding present", (222) Sacks' activities of collection converge on a concrete object, a living record on which he may anchor his other, collected stories and sights. The purchase and the gift giving, however, are somewhat different to a naturalist's collection and classification. Buying the plant at a later date and a location removed from his encounter in its natural setting, Sacks may be revisiting the experience in his memory, but the significance of the object and its connection to the narrative are effectively altered by the changed contexts of re-encounter and its function as a gift. Similarly, confronted with an "inauthentic" specimen of "*Cycas circinalis*", notably different from those he observed in Guam and Rota, Sacks must acknowledge the "complexities of identitifying" variable species like the cycad that can defeat the universal cataloguing project of the naturalist (222-3).[24] The implications of this anecdote emphasise the limitations of treating an object or a story in stasis, and through one disciplinary

[24] Sacks uses this misrecognition to emphasise the speed of evolutionary change, note the newly-recognised, distinct species of *Cycas micronesica,* and ponder on the likelihood of its greater toxicity,

discourse. The cycad becomes a souvenir that can be passed on as one, possible potted history, but its significance and function will continue to travel beyond the scientific gaze, into other cultural domains.

Travelling to the Pacific, for Sacks, entails travel in several, parallel knowledge domains that require linking through the organising practice of writing. With this focus, his project is presented as having more concern with problem solving, critique and extending sources of knowledge than premature predictions of cultural death embodied in the bitter nostalgia of Theroux. Although the scale of the cosmological reflections of these two authors shows the interchange of fantasy with science, it is Sacks whose reported childhood charting of the Pacific from afar is refracted through personal, empirical experience of others' texts, scientific and fictional, culminating with a fusion of the two: science fiction (3-8). Such a focus of "rational" imagination displays a concern not just with the past, but one which also incorporates a significant involvement with possible worlds of the present and future into a desire for knowledge and connection in the travelled zone.

Raban: The Sea as the Story and its Setting.

Jonathan Raban's *Passage to Juneau* continues Sack's provisional inclusion of diverse voices and spatial models. Yet, where Sacks dwells on the special scientific relevance of island *isolation* in providing a useful laboratory for considering (and possibly extending) the limits of Western empiricism, Raban reflects on the special histories of encounter and models of ethnography that characterise his trip up the Pacific Northwest coast, as well as dwelling on a more general history of representing the sea. In Raban's case, the emblematic nature of the sea in different cultural representations figures as a powerful focal point from which to spin yarns of contact

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yet this criticism of the cataloguing project also seems evident.

and parallel perception. While Raban also initially interrogates the European notion of the sea as abyss, he moves on to thinking of it as an ambivalent reflective surface:

> it might be possible to think of a sea as the sum of all the reflections it had held during its history. You'd never know the half of them, of course; but in the clashes and contradictions of image against image you might at least catch something of the provocative power of the sea, which has meant so much, variously, to us. To put oneself on a sea route as old and heavily travelled as the Inside Passage was to join the epic cavalcade of all those, present and past, who'd found some kind of meaning in these waters. In an average day's sailing, one might have to alter course to give way to a Holland-America Line cruise ship; a Squad of family gill-netters; an NOAA research vessel full of scientists doing fieldwork; the garbage scow, piled high with crushed cars, fridges, filing cabinets, on its regular fortnightly run between Junea and Seattle. I always suffer from mild delusions when I'm alone for long at sea, and it would be no surprise to find myself hauling the wheel to starboard to get clear of a survey-pinnace, under a yellowed lugsail, from the Vancouver expedition, or, skirting a fog-cliff, a red-and-black-painted Haida canoe, laden with Chilkat blankets, going south to trade. (35)

Raban's practice of travel, in a yacht up the Inside Passage, observes, "mediates" and merges several travel practices and histories on the one waterway. As he lists the multitude of fellow travellers on the crowded waterway, he claims, "each ship might as well be sailing a separate ocean." (35-6). However, this the lack of agreement between versions of the sea, with vessels and their crews separated in time, maritime function and cultural perspective, provides the nexus for the book and Raban's physical voyage.

Bahktin's model for a (fictionalised) temporal-spatial convergence, the chronotope, is a useful model for the way this waterway assumes a portal-like quality into the number of overlapping stories, experiences and perspectives. The Inside

Passage, the vessel and Raban, the narrator, assume a fictional character in this chronotopic treatment, as the literary setting for these stories to take place (Clifford, *Predicament* 236). In this journey, the seascape and surrounding land undergo metahistorical and mythical changes dependent upon the story being told at the time. Just as the shoreline reveals a current procession of historical and economic ruins inflicted through the timber, mining, fishing and gambling industries, stories of the use of the sea, ideologically and pragmatically, reveal a multi-salient text. Journeying through this environment, the boat acts as a figurative and physical library, a platform from which to re-access the natural and cultural world around the author, housing various texts and histories that make an "epic cavalcade" of the route. Accordingly, Raban displays a version of Urry"s "tourist gaze" that mixes "anthropological" and "spectatorial" modes: merging a solitary "sustained immersion" and "scanning and active interpretation of the 'culture'" with the communal "series of brief encounters, glancing and the collecting of many different signs of the environment" (Macnaghten and Urry 119). Studying both environment and books dwelling on different modes of encounter and travel, Raban shifts between these two practices of perception, at times "immersing" himself in the history of local contact and image worlds, at others sharing experiences as they happen, and juggling the conflicting signs of what is apparently a chaotic seascape. Repeating Clifford's analysis of Levi-Strauss in New York, Raban becomes "the anthropological *flâneur*... delighted, amazed, but also troubled by the chaos of simultaneous possibilities" (Clifford, *Predicament* 238).

Reflecting this stance, Raban's yacht is an inauthentic vessel which in turn assumes the identity of explorers' barks and longboats, native canoes (with and without missionaries and anthropologists onboard), and trawlers, and then back to his own yacht again, unexpectedly:

> My conceit was that I could listen and talk about the sea to all these people, and somehow mediate between their rival images. I had a boat, most of a spring and summer, a cargo of books, and the kind of dream of self-enrichment that spurs everyone who sails north from Seattle. Forget the herring and the salmon: I meant to go fishing for reflections, and come back with a glittering haul. Other people's reflections, as I thought then. I wasn't prepared for the catch I eventually made. (36)

Although the "mediation" of the author is clearly felt throughout, and the final significance of the book is a very personal, "rougher sea" (435), the vessel and the text reveal qualities of heteroglossic identity that are in stark contrast to Theroux's canoeing.

Narrating the Native Sea.

Against Raban's text, Theroux's "authentic" travel is a device for asserting a "realistic" mode of experience, but, more importantly, it is also a morally comparative allusion to the degeneration of Pacific cultures. He paddles in the Pacific to highlight how much the naturally sea-faring Polynesians have regressed after European contact. As he reveals: "I liked hearing stories of Polynesian seasickness. It was like discovering people you had always regarded as cannibals to be vegetarians" (372). Never one to repress one of his opinions, he also suggests, "the Samoans were not boat people themselves - only the oldest ones could remember paddling in a canoe or sailing an outrigger. This skill of using small craft, by which I tended to judge Pacific islands, had just about vanished in Samoa" (464). This kind of nautical juxtaposition fits into a tradition of cultural comparison. Missionary contrasts between the seamanship of whites and natives abound in the literature of contact. William Ellis, writing in his early nineteenth-century *Polynesian Researches*, links the Tahitian war canoes with a classical past thereby primitivising them somewhat "positively". By

comparing them to the Argonauts, Ellis introduces a trope that is later picked up again by Raban, Malinowski and David Lewis, researchers interested in highlighting the skills of their subjects through classical allusion (Raban 23-4, 93-5). However, Ellis' initial "compliment" is soon dissipated in his description of the "inevitable" outcome of a boat race between the races. In his observation, Tahitian sailors would start out enthusiastically, but would lose interest, letting the Europeans pull away. This scene is taken as figurative of Polynesian inconstancy as an "invariable" child-like quality (Edmond 110).

Raban's travel practice is distinctly critical of such Eurocentric stereotype, collecting some of the disparate elements of local encounter that display evidently adult, if differing, perspectives. His depiction of native nautical skill and behaviour in boats is of a continuing practice with and vision of the water as their "natural" element. Raban's version of the above exchange deflates missionary sermonising with a consideration of pragmatic indigenous practices. Citing the observations of the Vancouver expedition and early settler, James Swan, Raban presents Western alarm, bafflement and irritation at

> the multitudinous comings and goings [of native canoes], full of obscure purpose... the whites, who conceived of the sea as an empty space, expected their canoe to go in a straight line, a compass course, from departure point to destination, and could not fathom why Indian pilots should insist on frittering away time in a succession of stops, starts, and unnecessary diversions. (98-9)

Raban blames this reaction on "two world-views... in collision." (103). He contends that European explorers and colonists, from Vancouver onwards, have tended to fixate on the features of the land from their boats and view it, with "mental chainsaws", as the prize (either potential real estate, or an ideological and material "wild" resource). In contrast, he claims that the locals turned their backs on the

interior, settled on the "thin ribbon of shoreline," and see the "sea and its beaches represent[ing] safety, light, home, society, and the continuation of life." (103)

Such a model is consistent with Hau'ofa's call to renewed traditions in inter- and intra-island exchange, transmigration, empowerment, expansiveness, expression of the positive attributes of Oceania further:

> There is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as a 'sea of islands.' The first emphasizes dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centres of power. When you focus this way you stress the smallness and remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships.... 'Oceania' connotes a sea of islands with their inhabitants. The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves.... The resources of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, Tuvaluans, I-Kiribatis, Fijians, Indo-Fijians and Tongans, are no longer confined to their national boundaries,... so much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on an informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to the enforcers of the laws of confinement and regulated mobility. (Hau'ofa, 1993: 7- 8, 11)

Hau'ofa's critical revisioning of Oceanian practice creates traditional patterns of movement and cultural exchange anew, reflected artistically in his own work and in others', such as poet Robert Sullivan, who remakes traditional navigation techniques for new contexts, expressing the fluid potentials of Pacific culture. In *Star Waka*, Sullivan's figuration of vehicles, reference and travelling activity, roaming the Pacific of the past, present and future, are based on a fluid understanding of models of boat, star-plotting, and journeying, creating new histories of migration and identity. In his text, he jumps along the historical and mythological timeline, from Maori creation myths, through a celebration at the occasion of junking his decrepit "Honda Waka", to a projection of a waka sent towards the stars in "2140AD." Intrinsic to this moving

vision is a patterning that seems more prominent at times than others: "I wrote *Star Waka* with some threads to it: that each poem must have a star, a waka or the ocean. This sequence is like a waka, members of the crew change, the rhythm and the view changes - it is subject to the laws of nature" (viii). However, as much as the subject matter seems to shift, and contemporary issues are introduced, founding principles of navigation (76) and whanau (19) are linked in the presence of waka.

As a similar foundation, Raban's portable library provides samples of this contrast between local and foreign outlooks, when he relates native practices in navigation, stories and art collected comparatively against Western traditions. His vision of the sea as the "canoe-Indians' workplace, their open market, and their battleground," realises a social terrain that produces skills and behaviours from familiarity. The portrait is of both a natural and mythologized relationship displayed, for instance, in intimate readings of the Inside Passage's terrific tidal races (105).

Raban "natural" relation of Lewis' connection between navigators of Western antiquity and those still operating in the Pacific of the 1960s, who understand a sea's "mobile surface full of portents, clues and meanings"(95), also gives rise to an assertion of the gendered nature of travel. He seems particularly interested in Lewis' account of "testicular" navigation: plotting a course guided by one's balls. He glosses this practice as natural, using "the instruments best attuned to picking up slight variations in the rhythm of a swell" (94). His own experience is used to reinforce this "rule": making an amusing connection to riding the "humpback bridges" of his own childhood and feeling like a "small but energetic tree frog [was] trapped inside one's scrotum"; and also admitting to an adult experiment in a kind of nautical frottage with his boat and wave patterns (94). Raban thereby contentiously (and somewhat disturbingly) attributes traditional arts of travel to a male domain: the sea is for

"Sea*men*" (94). Western gadgetry, it must follow, severs this (gendered) connection with the sea in a symbolic emasculation:

> the helmsman looked away from the sea, wedding himself to a geometrical abstraction that had no tangible reality in nature. Possession of a compass soon rendered obsolete a great body of inherited, instinctual knowledge, and rendered the sea itself - in fair weather, at least - as a void, an empty space to be traversed by a numbered rhumb line. (96-7)

Whether it is the inaccurate marine chronometer on Vancouver's expedition (56), Conrad's "MacWhirr" with his hubristic "conquer[ing]...compass and engine" (98), or Raban's "mocking" GPS device (91), the presented function of these devices is to help in maritime navigation, yet they also function in an alien voiding of the "natural" sea. In marked contrast, Raban matches the Indian practical knowledges of the sea presented in *Passage to Juneau* with mythical and artistic configurations that reveal a people truly plumbed on this element.

Ironically, much of Raban's recognition of the symbolism of water in "Canoe-indian" art relies heavily on reading a tradition based in Western interpretation, including those of colonial artist, José Cardero, missionary Judge Swan, anthropologist Franz Boas and the "leading modern authority on Indian art of the Northwest coast," Bill Holm (201-3). Nevertheless, he formulates his own, symbolic and environmental theory that he matches to observations and experience. The shape that is the "fundamental design-unit in the art of all the Northwest coastal tribes" (202), and termed "ovoid" by Holm, becomes, in Raban's analysis, a reflection of the most powerful and ever-present feature of the environment. Touring local museums, Raban feels that he is viewing "an art in thrall to ripples and reflections" (205). The "ovoid", for Raban, is a shape that matches the eddies, ripples and currents on the shifting surface of this piece of sea, a shape that is ever-present yet resists his attempts

at photographic capture (202). The other significant feature of this art that he focuses on is its symmetry, explained (and more successfully photographed) as the reflective doubling of the water (205-6). Raban's travels through this seascape are, likewise, similarly doubled, becoming physical and artistic histories:

> water plays tricks on whatever lies within its reach. It distorts and dismembers, then restores an extravagant wholeness, making two of one - which is exactly what the Indian artists of the Northwest were doing in their designs. Living on water, as aquatic in their habits as sea otters, the coastal tribes couldn't help but see in the water's playful games a true reflection of their own instinctive worldview. Rippled surfaces exposed a restless and inconstant nature, in which things continually swapped places and sudden, mysterious transformations abounded. (207)

Raban supports this interpretation with a reading of the limits of experience in Indian story telling. Those versions collected by early anthropologists are "harsh, startling, and scatological narratives" (216), where the social terrain is narrow and interchangeable with the animal world, ends are often those of exile, suicide or madness, action is disjointed and contingent on unexpected intrusions of nature, and the ocean depths and forested interior are equally feared and respected (216-9).

> In Kwakiutl stories, masks, and statuary, two important characters recur: Komogwa, the submarine plutocrat, and his forest counterpart, Tsonogwa. Though operating independently, in different elements, they are a perfectly matched couple.... Both of these beings prey on humankind. Komogwa drags canoes under the surface. Tsonogwa, a thief and a kidnapper, steals young children from villages.... Yet both figures were intimately associated with livelihood and wealth... embod[ying] the wilderness that humans must brave in order to survive or prosper. (218-9)

In Raban's interpretation, the mythology of death-dealing rapids (and mountain "thunderbirds") is balanced by the provision of wealth to "lucky, or clever Indians",

who manage to read their surroundings and, in spite of their natural malignance, pluck copper and salmon from the depths (219).[25] Knowledge of the environment, a balancing act of "justified terror" and respect encapsulated in art, stories, and social practice, is projected as necessary for personal and social survival. Far from producing an overly romantic, nostalgic vision, Raban, akin to Sacks in this respect, acknowledges a measure of social and material galvanisation alongside the commonly catalogued ills of contact with Europeans.

The Trade of Places.

The different worldviews observed in trade often demonstrate uneven exchanges within Raban's "contact zone." These are, however, not necessarily one-sided. The history of cross-cultural encounter in the region is messy, operating under widely miscomprehended circumstances and positions, contrary impulses, and to contrary effects. For instance, while Raban talks of Vancouver and Cook as displaying mathematical genius in plotting their position, displaying the "enlightened" value of rational knowledge, he is critical of the possessive aspect of their enterprise. In a passage quoted by Jonathan Lamb, Raban discloses that

> the saloon of my boat was dominated by the memoirs of eighteenth-century white explorers - intruders from the Age of Reason for whom measurement, with their quadrants, chronometers, and magnetic compasses, was a form of taking possession.... As part of the century's great communal project of Linnaean taxonomy, they went fossicking for specimens of plants, birds, mammals. They carved their emerging charts of the sea with names... shoot! classify! name! describe! - the imperatives of eighteenth-century discovery. (25)

[25] Raban notes Lévi-Strauss' understanding of the two, copper and salmon, sharing the same word.

Lamb understandably contests this view as a generalised and overconfident assertion of imperial certainties: "it is as if no alarms or mistakes disturbed the collection of specimens, and no terrors smudged the cartographic grid" (Lamb 10). Obviously, "the communal project of Linnaean taxonomy" operated with a policy of cataloguing only certain, identifying features of discovery and excluded others.

However, the implied criticism of Raban, that he infers the existence of an emotionless, "coherent national policy," is somewhat strained (Lamb 9). Raban's library readings reveal the narrative multiplicity and disturbances within the "project"; an ideological trading that cannot be resolved into a single, cohesive policy. Within the presented difference between imperial or colonial visions of water and those of the coastal Indians Raban does not discount the diversity of European encounters. The consumption of the sea and the Northwest coast has traded on many different models of value, material and ideological, which Raban places historically. The same page as the quotation that Lamb finds such a "generalisation," Raban quotes Cook's economic interest in the local sea otters' fur (25). In Cook's estimation, the location where "*so valuable an article of commerce may be met with, cannot be a matter of indifference*" (26). Even on the Vancouver expedition itself, very different, concurrent models are shown to exist. Raban writes of "Captain Van" translating the coastline into Augustan parkland (61-2) and a site for practising in the socially-despicable activities of commerce (194), his science officer seeing a wide-open frontier for naturalist exploration (including a close encounter with a skunk [63]), petty officer Puget, as amateur and romantic anthropologist, is observed viewing the habitat of Rousseau's "Natural Man" (63), and the gentlemen midshipmen of the *Discovery*, budding "Grand Tourists", producing a wild space befitting the "delightful horror" of the eighteenth-century Sublime, as proscribed by Edmund Burke (157-8). Such divergent

visions exemplify different projects, classes and discourses present in the same vessel, and antecedent discourses for the subsequent history of the Inside Passage. The natural resources of the coast, in conjunction with a Western capitalist economy, can produce historical travellers such as the fur-trader, the gill-netter, the lumberjack, or the tourist. However, the social and ideological position of these constructed characters, and their engagement with natural resources, can shift radically. In the example of the lumberjack, in the space of the twentieth-century's political developments, timberworkers have shifted from Emersonian natural men, skilled, working-class heros and potential, revolutionary "Wobblies" (235), to ecological vandals.

Similarly, Raban demonstrates that the historical conception of material value is far from universal. In encounters with Vancouver's expedition, comparative ideologies of "natural" value in gaudy trinkets and practical knowledge and use of metal meet. *Discovery* was apparently stuffed with feathers and baubles for the purpose of trade, but initial lukewarm interest by the Indians gave way to disdain as the Europeans flooded the market with sparkly, but useless merchandise. Raban relates tales of Indians' dogs "decked in beads from head to tail," and is directed to a beach literally carpeted with these bits of Venetian glass (242-3). The Indians' interest, instead, lay in Vancouver's vessel itself, its metalwork, tools, weapons and cloth (221). As in the case of Cook, with whose death this consuming interest can be plausibly connected,[26] the metal parts of the ships were highly sought after by Indians. As Cook relates,

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[26] Cook's death, and its surrounding controversy, occupies much space in historical and romantic accounts of the South Seas. For example, see Edmonds, and also Borofsky, "Cook, Lono, Obeyesekere, and Sahlins," in Borofsky 420-42. However, native theft of metal and Cook's retaliatory intent must be considered an important part of the fatal confrontation. (cf. Edmonds).

> *Nothing would go down with our visitors but metal; and brass had by this time supplanted iron, being so eagerly sought after, that, before we left this place, hardly a bit of it was left in the ships, except what belonged to our necessary instruments. Whole suits of clothes were stripped of every button; bureaus of their furniture, and copper kettles, tin canisters, candlesticks, and the like, all went to wreck.* (243)

Although, theft is indicated in some instances, trade is more often the cause of this metallurgic stripping. Some of this trade was not officially sanctioned but rather tolerated, with sailors buying sexual favours in exchange for buttons, nails or even scoured pewter plates on loan for a night (196). Nevertheless, although metal had its obvious practical value on the ships, the Europeans found official profit in these exchanges. Besides the immediately gratifying provisioning of victuals and sex, collecting stockpiles of valuable fur and a wealth of native artefacts ensured not only the solvency of the expedition, but could also privately supplement pensions in later years (147). On their side of the exchange, Raban presents the Indians' beneficial capitalisation on European commercial desires, especially the trade in otter-fur. With the aid of European tools and materials, and examples of art and culture, Indian life and culture was, in some respects, "improved." Raban's example of this hinges on a representational change from the portrayal of the meaningfully terrifying Tsonogwa, to the "twenty-two-foot-tall sculptural effigy... looking like a shocked Minnie Mouse," photographed at the turn of the twentieth-century by Edward Curtis (221). Raban reads the softening style, and the impressive scale and detail, as representative of the softening and material improvement of Indian life provided by cultural exchange. Yet this perception discloses, at the same time, a sense of bemusement at the commodification, and diminishment, of Indian culture into a post-contact tourist attraction.

Watered-down Culture, and Drowned Aspirations.

Syncretic acculturation and hybridised visions litter the shoreline of Raban's journey in a manner that ignores the simplistic moral connections of Theroux. With a great part of his trip absorbed in the interrogation of meanings in the collection of narrative and artefacts, Raban displays an ambivalence fitting his disparate, mixed sources. In a project parallel to Clifford's Northwest museum travels (*Routes* 107-46), Raban notes the influence of different models of presentation, and even in the production of stories and objects, that complicate notions of authenticity. In one instance, he suggests the syncretic origins of totem building, citing the influence of ship figure-heads, new tools, missionary artefacts and fur-trade wealth combining with "traditional" artistic and representational modes (221). The survival of authentic narratives is also interrogated through mixed reactions. The wholesale bowdlerising of native folk tales, either through sanctimonious cutting and paraphrase or translation into acceptable Victorian formats or languages,[27] removes features of bawdy, scatological and vengeful action that Raban feels are central to understanding Indian experience and worldviews (215). Although less corrupt versions, collected by ethnographers like Boas, survive in counterpoint to these modernised versions (214), even some of these, he suggests, have been transcribed after the influence of "colonization, Christianity, and tourism":

> the translations of local languages into German and English were crude; the eager-to-please Indian tellers were already familiar with imported Bible stories and European folktales; and when the collectors were faced with strange disjunctions, they provided transitions and linkages that gave these narratives the smooth shape of something by Aesop or the Brothers Grimm. (25)

[27] Raban cites an example of Swanton, "not an obvious prude," slipping into Latin for the naughty bits of a tale.

Similarly, in Raban's observation of modernised Indian dance and song, the author's boredom is displayed through a distrust of the spectacle, performed in a casino by participants wearing a mixture of traditional costume and windbreakers adorned with "TULALIP BINGO". Raban sees the spiritualised content as evidence of exposure to successive religious movements (72-4). These influences, including Shakerism and the post-Christian New Age stereotyping of primitive peoples, are displayed in "possession", speaking-in-tongues, and the mystical translation of "spirit" itself into the supernatural domain: "a Eurocentric dualistic imposition on a monist culture and language." (73) However, if such a focus suggests a "washed-out" culture, Raban revises his estimation after talking to one of the dancers. The Indian stresses the "importance of the spirit dances to young men his age. Most of the dancers were out of jobs... [or] had had trouble in the past with alcohol or crack cocaine. The dances helped to repair their self-esteem by putting them in touch with 'olden-day traditions'" (76). In spite of his boredom, Raban comes to appreciate the dance as

> revelatory, in its jumble of long-disused customs, ecstatic Christianity, careless translation, ethnic pride, anthropology, New Age mysticism, and Oprah Winfrey-style therapy. I had gone in the hope of finding a true fragment of the lost maritime culture of the Coastal Indians. Fat chance. Cast a leadline now into the turbid water of the Salish tribal past, and it would never touch bottom. (77)

Multiple cultural contacts has therefore resulted in a mixture of unreliable proportions, frustrating to the author and yet not to readily dismissed as the bogus failings of "doomed" traditions, in the vein of a Theroux. On the other hand, Raban often presents the collection of Western aspirations as watered-down, mixed, and often drowned under the troubled surface of the coastal region.

In a correlation to the representation of Indian mixtures and adjustments, Raban consumes Western conceptions of the sea as an antagonistic element that threatens its

own acts of consumption. Yet if Indian visions of nature are presented as having been comparatively mellowed by encounters with European culture, in Raban's estimation nature has proved harsh in its trade with Westerners. In a voyage symbolically haunted by the visions of death present in the dangerous currents and weather, deadhead logs and imagined floating corpses, he also traces the fates of seaboard communities that seem to have "gone under". Alongside what can be justified as the partial ruins and partial survival of earlier Indian settlement (25) reside a succession of "frontier" activities that have been swallowed up by the environment. For instance, a race against civilisation's disappearance is suggested when he stops at recently ruined Namu, and then finds his next port-of-call, Bella Bella, rapidly following suit (316-8). Incidentally tracing the fishing route north and valorising one of the few remaining frontier endeavours, a comparison is made between "idle" tourists, his own visionary practice of consumption and other, authentically productive travel practices like fishing, for which the sea is a proving ground. However, fishing is as financially dangerous as it is physically risky, with the over-consumption of its resources suggesting a reciprocal swallowing up of the livelihoods of thousands of gill-netters (17-20). In practice, tourism seems likely to be the long-term survivor of this proving ground, consuming the Inside Passage as "picturesque" in a manner directly descended from "Captain Van's" midshipsmen and Edward Curtis.[28]

Literary tourism, abundantly present in Raban's sampling, often suggests a smugness in surviving the act of travel through its writing from the position of return,

[28] Raban discusses Curtis as a primitivist who, along with John Muir, "manufactured the essential images needed by the twentieth-century tourist industry. By the time I arrived in the Northwest, fleets of white cruise ships were on regular patrol up and down the Inside Passage, and the sea had become a medium through which passengers could scan what Muir called 'the glorious pages of nature's Bible'". (This consuming tourist trade with crafts as various as cruise ships, kayaks, sailboats and motorlaunches is derisively observed by "working" boatmen.) See Raban, 32 However, the possibility of reconsuming and rehistoricizing Curtis' work for a different kind of tourism is presented in Clifford's discovery of a Curtis-image postcard recontextualised by detailed additional captions, found at the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre. (See Clifford, *Routes* 127-8).

even if the focus is often morbid (213). However, instead of presenting a slightly kitsch, postmodern version of the "and I only am escaped alone to tell thee" maritime trope of Melville (after Job), the place of return in Raban is voided as a site of valedictory survival. Events overtake Raban that dislodge some of his status as observing tourist and his distance in contemplating the Inside Passage as a chronotope, with the introduction of disaster beyond the scope of the motif which runs throughout the text. Raban may escape the ignominious end of Shelley, poet, amateur yachtsman and speedfreak, drowned when he exposes his unstable, custom-made nautical folly to an unforgiving storm (270-3). However, Raban's physical survival of turbulent waters is superseded by the further personal proving action of the sea, the "rougher sea" of personal relationships. In his absence, and partially because of it, he is faced with familial destruction. First his father is consumed by cancer (246-92), and then his marriage ends up on the rocks. Fittingly set amongst the ruins of Juneau's goldmine, his wife's suddenly stated desire for separation is bitter in its effect of focussing trivial detail into the scene:

> "I wanted to talk about separating. Like, I wondered if you've thought of separating?... We're happier when you're not there."
>
> "You don't mean *we*. You mean you. *You're* happier."
>
> "OK," Jean said. "I'm happier."
>
> "This is what you came to Juneau for? To tell me this?"
>
> "I wanted to be honest." The cigarette pack in her lap read like a subtitle in a French movie: *True!* The ebb tide was running hard, and a gill-netter, pushing up-channel to Juneau, was stuck fast in a space of water between the pumphouse and Jean's head. The boat was throwing up a roiling V of wake but making no visible progress over the ground at all....I couldn't speak. She had her script, I had none. There was nothing to discuss: that was plain from the rigid furrows in Jean's forehead, the jut of her nose, the

> tight clamp of her lips on the filter of her cigarette. Her eyes, tungsten hard, refused to meet mine, offered no way in. She had ended our marriage long before today, and now was only going through the wearisome motions of informing me that what was done was done.... The fishing boat hadn't budged. The world had changed, but the gill-netter was in exactly the same place as before, driving at full power into the current and getting nowhere. (420-3)

The cinematic effects alluded to in discussing of "subtitles" are also to be noted in the picturesque description of the setting, the slow-motion action implied in the image of the gill-netter in the background, facial and gestural close-ups, a fascination with props (such as cigarettes), dramatised dialogue and interior monologue. This elevated focus indicates the heightened level of epiphany that culminates his journey. Yet, after this scene, the narrator is left on his own to consider the implications of the event, and the tone of the entire text matches this turn to *narrated* introversion. Of course, though, because of its very written narration, the private self is observed looking at itself. Locking himself up in his boat, Raban turns, in a writerly manner, to a like mind:

> while the coffee was brewing, I got out a sheaf of paper, enough to pen an epic, and began writing to a friend on Cape Cod.
>
> *Dear Paul,*
>
> *Every successful voyage ought to culminate in a major discovery, and at the end of this voyage I feel like Sir Walter Raleigh. Not far from Juneau, I found my own private Guiana, though I wish to God I hadn't....* (424)

The end of Raban's voyage, in Juneau, is not the real end, necessitating a return to Seattle to complete the book. Unfortunately for Raban, though, the return on the sea is displaced by a consciousness of the inability to return to the situation that he has left some months before. In such a crowded waterway, Raban's project finally

assumes a truly lonely dimension, reflecting the fate of "Captain Van" and Paul Theroux, and assuming a solipsistic, reflective touristic vision. As Jonathan Lamb states, "the ego in crisis shuts itself up with the narratives of troubled first persons" (Lamb 10). Yet, even while Raban's book appears to end with a limiting activity of solitary reflection on the surface of the sea that had seemed to contain so many stories, passing from the polyphony of a chronotopic order to a self-deprecating monologue, this *narrowing* is effected through a continuation of narrative displacements. On his journey back to the "rougher sea," Raban still maintains a constant mediation of his subjectivity through quotation and speculation of other's perspectives, at the same time as all the diversity of his reflections on a sea of histories take up a more narcissistic self-reflection reminiscent of Theroux and Sacks before him.

Sleight Returns of the "Look."

Finally then, my distinctions between the palagi writers of this chapter are reduced by a common reflexive subjectivity. In terms of divergent subjects of focus, through the re-enacting of differing traditions of discourse (elite modernist, scientific, or pluralist historiography), I show how apparently discontinuous travelling subjectivities are nonetheless related in the convergence of reliance upon historically-tainted modes of narrative. In this chapter, I have shown how the three palagi voyages examined act as practices of (re)consuming the sites and sights of previous authors' journeys, (re)creating and (re)performing an Ocean of stories fashioned through these reflexive histories. This treatment of the Pacific, with its implicit narrowing of the field of travel subjects, requires significant critical review and reassessment. Thus, through my indication towards writings from Pacific peoples,

although, again, limited in scope to just a handful of texts and authors, I hope to have displayed some practices that seek to interrupt and redefine visions of the region that rely on a colonial reflexivity, even in texts that assume some level of reciprocity. Despite their own limitations and narrative borrowing from Western tropes, "autoethnographic" Pacific texts display counter-discursive visions of placement and displacement that attempt to shift out from under the belittling gaze of Western eyes (Pratt 7).

In contemporary, literary practices of Pacific "anti-tourism", Hau'ofa's call for a necessarily inspirational alternative to being spoken for and over are answered in the display of alternative modes of expression and travel. An instance of resistance is notably clear in Teaiwa's poem, "Mixed Blood", which demonstrates a rebuttal of imposed terms of identity on Pacific peoples. Teaiwa writes:

My identity

is not

a problem

a mystery

soluble

a contract

a neophyte

an interest rate.

Mixed blood:

resolves

solves

dissolves

negotiates

initiates

appreciates. . .

And again they ask me HOW?

(Teaiwa, "Mixed Blood").

The hybridity of "mixed blood", for Teaiwa, challenges the typography of colonial containment, displaced into technical, inhuman terminology. Instead, residing between cultures in a "mobile" position, Pacific peoples' identity travels between terms. Despite this, I maintain that the continuing touristic visions of palagi writers who also fixate upon identity in this domain tend to stress ambivalence to local change, and a desire to read their own cultural pasts in the reflecting waters of the Pacific.

As much as the palagi writers I have looked at in this chapter display a desire for movement, and appear aware of the shifting surface of the ocean they (re)historicize, the reflexive nature of their narratives asserts a stronger desire for stasis: especially so in terms of rendering an unchanging subjective relationship. As long as it is they who are narrating, palagi cultural tourists seem to feel more of an affinity with predecessor palagi commentators than the subjects of contemporary contact. In the extreme, I suggest Theroux's disgust and fascination with the present Pacific represents a reaction to an unsettlement of the artistic and historical template that he travels with, even as he attempts to reassert a subjective authority through channelling a medley of prior textualised "Pacifics". Although less reactionary in tone, I have emphasized the same praxis of comparison in the work of Sacks and Raban, who seem unable to experience the local without a book, or even a floating library, at hand. Although this practice results in a richness, and narrative "depth" being maintained, and allows me to succeed in tracing many of the sources for the attitudes displayed to contemporary Pacific subjects, the reciprocity of travel contact

between subjects remains underdeveloped, and therefore under-reported. While Raban comes closest to channelling the perspectives of locals, and demonstrating a fuller understanding of the divergent histories of palagi perspective emergent in his own complex reactions to travel encounters, even he succumbs to a collapsing of focus into the topos of, albeit unwelcome, self-discovery.

So, where are those travel practices that seek to move further beyond "navel-gazing"? As part of my own movement practice, I travel next to a different focal location and travelling subjectivity. Predominantly examining Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*, and aware of its reputation as exemplary of a "nomadic" mode of discourse, I will analyse and test the literary praxis at work, the various methodologies implied in the performance of Chatwin, the "nomad", and of his versions of "Australia", and question the positioning of local and historical subjects in relation to this performance, with a view to placing the significance of this travel term as a subject within contemporary locations of culture.

TWO.

Performing on *Songlines*: (Re)presentations of "Nomadology."

> The best thing of all is to walk. We should follow the Chinese poet Li Po in 'the hardships of travel and the many branchings of the way.' For life is a journey through a wilderness. This concept, universal to the point of banality, could not have survived unless it were biologically true. (Chatwin, "Anatomy of Restlessness" 103).

> For the nomad, Australia is still not divided into eight "states" or territories, it is criss-crossed with tracks. The smooth space of these invisible and secret tracks has been violently assaulted by the public checker-board grid of the states.
>
> (Muecke, *Reading the Country* 219).

In this, the second chapter of my study of the subjects of contemporary travel writing and theorising displacements, I focus chiefly on the cultural praxis surrounding Bruce Chatwin. I argue that, as an eminent product and producer of the late twentieth century's interest in travel literature, Chatwin represents many of the conflicting discourses that construct the "genre". However, although my examination of *The Songlines*, published two years before the author's death, and connected texts, reveals much continuity with the literary production around the Pacific discussed in the previous chapter, I find it especially significant in its engagement with the discursive practices of "Nomadology". This is a term that is not just bound up with connotations of wandering subject matter, but also a particular cartography of production and reception. Chatwin's focus on a specific setting, a fusion of trips to several Central Australian sites in the mid 1980s and a kind of cultural education, is

projected against a montage of travels, physical, literary, anthropological and ethnographical, to produce a text that celebrates a universal, generalised "Nomadic" experience. With this emphasis, I examine *The Songlines* and a selection of connected pieces in ways that both test and illustrate the possibilities available for the creation of contemporary ethnographic texts, querying how "nomadic" writers seek to differentiate their travel practices and subject matter from the other modes of displacement, elevating or privileging their own positions.

Nevertheless, I will also discuss the tendencies in writing praxis that link a figure like Chatwin not only to elite "tourists", but to exiles and migrants too. In this analysis I treat the work of poststructuralist theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari as a "toolbox", and, amongst other theoretical and multidisciplinary considerations, I place Chatwin against their conceptual model of "nomadology". As such, his work is open to questions about the difference(s) between his subject(s) and his own position as well as how his methodology negotiates between practices of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The postmodern nature of such a "reflexive" subjectivity connects particularly with the fluctuating position of "becoming" in a Deleuzian sense. In conjunction with this, an examination of Chatwin's book shows the selections made from the available range of discourse and how such choices shape the production and reception of his work in comparison to other available texts, creating a poetic performance of social critique.

Rehearsals of a Poststructural Nomadic.

Chatwin's performance of "nomad" thought is one that resonates with the theories of Deleuze and Guattari. In their book, *A Thousand Plateaus* (the second part of a major collaborative project, *Schizophrenia and Capitalism*), one "plateau", or section

dealing with a particularly dynamic historical moment, is particularly dedicated to the nomad "subject". "A Treatise on Nomadology - The War Machine" is a study on practices of extrication from the "state apparatus", making a connection between war and the "nomad subject" (Deleuze and Guattari 351-423). By producing an image of the nomadic warrior, most notably that of the demonised Mongol invaders (the emphasis is noted in the date for this plateau, 1227), the state distances itself from its own militarism and at the same time produces an antithesis for its "over coding" logos in the "decoding" project of nomos.

Strong links can be observed between this section and Chatwin's constant return to the subject of nomadism. Chatwin, like Deleuze and Guattari, views the nomadic subject as something more than the "inhuman" barbarian fixated upon by states. Many years before his trips to Australia, Chatwin historicized the "Nomad Invasions" (1972) as part of the long term "conflict between two incompatible, yet complementary systems", and wrote of the importance of the "Nomadic Alternatives" (1969-70) in providing a moral and ethical corrective to the flawed assumptions of superiority present in the settlement of the state (*What Am I Doing Here* 216-232; *Anatomy* 75-108). Eventually he expanded this topic and subsumed it into both the specific, Aboriginal focus and more universal discussion of nomadology in *The Songlines.*

The link between the authors is not one of subject alone, though. Deleuze and Guattari's general application of nomad thought is a multidisciplined, hybrid, bastardised process, similar in form to the postmodern bricolage of Chatwin's work. The two French poststructuralists use several interconnected symbols to emphasize their creation of a new theoretical approach opposing what they call "state philosophy". By "state philosophy" they mean the procedures of thought historically

allied and constituted in the establishment of state apparatus of control: systemic modes of thought founded on essentialist notions of sameness and constancy (Massumi 4-5). Deleuze and Guattari's subversive symbols are embodied in the stylistics of their text, which are just as revolutionary in form as in intent. Thus, the figure of the rhizome, (borrowed from biology) a spreading, interconnected structure with all points associated in the middle, becomes a counter-model to the received "arborescent" model of institutional thought that filiates towards ends. More important in the context of a comparison with Chatwin, their definition of schizophrenic or nomad thought is a justified response to conventionalised or "interiorised" thought, ranging freely beyond the striated or gridded vertical space of the state. Reflecting this, *A Thousand Plateaus* is structured horizontally, an anti-teleology that provides a "tool box" of analyses that can be rummaged through in any order and a "nomadic" or "smooth space" that allows the potential for multiple connections of signification unobstructed (Massumi 5-8).

The similarities between this practice and that of Chatwin's performance of nomadology present themselves when some examples of pages from the "Notebooks" section of *The Songlines* are examined (excerpts from excerpts as Chatwin's title for this section suggests). Initially Chatwin's fragments thematically discuss the spirituality or "natural" state of wandering:

> *From the Notebooks*
>
> Our nature lies in movement; complete calm is death.
>
> *Pascal, Pensées*
>
> A study of the Great Malady; horror of home.
>
> *Baudelaire, Journaux Intimes*
>
> The most convincing analysts of restlessness were often men who, for one reason or another, were immobilized: Pascal by stomach ailments and migraines, Baudelaire by

> drugs, St John of the Cross by the bars of his cell. There are French critics who would claim that Proust, the hermit of the cork-lined room, was the greatest of literary voyagers. The founders of monastic rule were forever devising techniques for quelling wanderlust in their novices. 'A monk out of his cell,' said St Anthony, 'is like a fish out of water.' Yet Christ and the Apostles *walked* their journeys through the hills of Palestine. (183)

Thus a spiritual and intellectual precedent is established for nomadology. On subsequent pages, Chatwin's nomadic subject transmogrifies according to other concerns: a sampling of a couple of pages demonstrates "performances" on nomadic militarism, the social cartography of "the road", the nomad's vulnerability in selecting a migratory path (vulnerable to nature and the state's "sub-machine guns"), the etymology of "nomos", "nemein", "nemesis", the archaeological remains of Homeric Age Scythian nomads and contemporary Dogon cattle herders, and Max Weber's account of the Calvinist genesis of capitalism set against a terminology ("capital, stock, pecuniary, chattel, sterling") of pastoral origin (205-6). The "nomadic" ranging of Chatwin's discourse, versed in quotations or the paraphrasing of other "nomadic" authorities, winnows through various traditions of literature, mixing his remaining selection together, metafictionally, by association with certain themes.

Chatwin's Nomadic Characterisation.

The "nomadic" performance of *The Songlines* is also based on the formulation and celebration of the figure of Chatwin himself. Chatwin plays the part of a "nomad," assuming the characteristics of his subjects through an artistic mediation. In this sense, *becoming* "nomad" is not limited to assuming the character of a pastoralist or hunter-gatherer. Instead, a "nomad" is a shifting, creative position, mediating any number of discursive strands.

Illustrating this openness and potential as a subject-position, there are many different possible performances and interpretations of nomad roles whose availability has been seized upon and represented in contemporary writing. What sort of subjects are these, and how should Chatwin be considered in relation to this "field"? First, what I would consider a category of "road warrior," a parallel, contemporary version of Deleuze's Mongol "war machine," expresses a nomadic practice celebrating a raw, and masculine, energy. Man and machine are linked in this performance, which tends towards an aggressive consumption of landscape, at pace, and declaration of independence from civilisation, even while materially dependent upon its products: cars and roads. In the context of Australia, *Mad Max* presents just such a popular trope; it is particularly effective in the way it reaffirms the landscape as harsh, empty, void and yet central to both action and characterisation (Gibson "Camera Natura" 213). Stephen Muecke's book, *No Road: Bitumen All the Way*, can also be read in this context, sharing a concern with roads, movement and a re-evaluation of civilisation against the landscape. Similarly, in the context of *America*, Baudrillard's road journey through the desert, westwards, is "in search of *astral* America, not social or cultural America, but the America of the empty, absolute freedom of the freeways, not the deep America of mores and mentalities, but the America of desert speed, of motels and mineral surfaces" (qt. Kaplan 70). Unfortunately for Baudrillard, this version of America is far from empty, for, besides the cultural baggage he brings with him, the "desert" has been literarily grid-locked by successive generations of metallic nomads, from beatnik Kerouacs to more recent road-spotting practices by the likes of Larry McMurtry.

Another version distinct from Chatwin's is based around nomad subjects who really are "homeless," and is far harder to categorise as a positive trope. I would

include in this category such figures as fugitives and vagrants. A nomadic representation of vagrancy might appear quite hard to reproduce: how do you get published when you lack the resources to maintain a reasonable standard of life? However, a tradition in the documentation of drifters exists, perhaps best indicated by the Depression-era photo essays of Dorothea Lange and gutter memoirs of George Orwell. Similarly, the stories of fugitives also represent nomadic traits of unfixed habitation and "aimless" movement. Within the literary field, the authors tapping into this vein of "outlaw" narrative (like Annie Proulx and Michael Ondaatje, in the American context, Thomas Keneally and Peter Carey, in Australia), do so in a manner that examines the social factors of exclusion and retribution for transgression that work to construct these types of subject. Alongside this, considerations of why these sort of nomad figures are such celebrated, potent symbols when society has initially rejected or persecuted them also seem necessary.

So, what makes Chatwin's project different and how are his practice and subjective aura constructed? In Chatwin's case, becoming nomad signifies a practice of new age, cultural tourism. His concerns and habitus reveal a desire to recreate himself, a travelling subject, in a position that *equates* with an idealised version of the subjects of his writing: authentic nomads. This practice shows some similarities to that of Raban, who I discussed in the previous chapter. However, Chatwin takes the "channelling" methodology even further.

I perceive Chatwin's creative process as an aesthetics of association: both external to the author and yet also highly self-reflexive in its process of fashioning. Amongst contemporary travel writers, Chatwin continues to function as a figure of particular importance, in spite of, but also partially because of, his relatively small body of published work and early death. Nine years after his death, in 1998, Nicholas

Shakespeare notes sales of over a million copies of Chatwin's works in paperback in 27 languages, amongst indications of a continuing popularity (Shakespeare 550). The increased saleability of his small collection of work, bolstered by posthumous publications of "unfinished" pieces, may in part be seen as a cashing in on the cult of the dead young artist. However, the claims to authority of "Chatwin," the cultural signature that resides with his corpus, are substantiated by other, more particular factors to be acknowledged in his readership. The growth of his reputation beyond the grave is certainly highly dependent on the particular mythic qualities constructed around his life as well as his death, qualities fed by his tendency to circumvent, fabricate, and dramatically perform the facts of his experience, a process matched in the continuing dialogue with his work carried on by other artists, critics and friends. An example of this tendency is Chatwin's ability to spin rumours of his own demise before the event: as when he describes his, soon-to-be fatal, illness as a rare bone fungus contracted from an ancient Chinese egg (*What Am I Doing Here* 5). This is an inventiveness that invites collusion from many members of the literary community while inciting vitriol in others. In such a way, the arguments for another cause of death, after the topical "outing" by his friend and fellow travel-writer, Redmond O'Hanlon, as having died from AIDS, and some vilification for Chatwin's supposed lack of "openness and honesty", further signal the co-existence of different versions of narrative, so that there remains life yet even in the narrative of his death (Murray 124-7; Taylor 196). This multiplicity of constructed, divergent "realities" is perhaps the centrally important feature of his success as a travel writer. Such a construction of *Chatwin*, the artistic object, can be seen in the literature that surrounds him, partially in reaction to his work, but also as a kind of "aura" produced by the level of

inventiveness generated in his accounts and continued by his literary friends.[29] In the literary world, the term "Chatwinesque" has even been coined, signifying an author-function of inventiveness and flexibility that is extremely attractive and extends the boundary of the text. As biographical commentators such as Susannah Clapp indicate, Chatwin cultivated a reputation fraught with controlled contradictions: "[h]e was famous for being a vivid presence. And he was famous for being absent: for being out of the country, out of the country, out of his books." Musing further on this somewhat Deleuzian oscillation between being present and absent, the paradox of being "Chatwinesque" also includes being a raconteur yet often silent, a managed "presence" in work and life that contained a large element of absence, ambiguous sexuality, and a high degree of tailored veracity of appearance and expertise in a divergence of roles (Clapp).

Although, as James Clifford points out, the process of self-fashioning in writers is more widespread than is immediately apparent, even in purportedly "scientific" texts (Clifford, *Predicament* 92-114), Chatwin puts the creation of himself as a work of art to the forefront, and readers' perception of his books is shaped by not only an awareness of celebrity but sometimes narratives that exist outside his written texts. Salman Rushdie, himself a traveller with whom I will deal in a later chapter, is one commentator who notes that Chatwin's written narratives are subject to a mutation and growth beyond the page, with alternative versions circulating in the oral territory of rumour or legend (*Imaginary Homelands* 238). Other writers are happy to subscribe to this "legend", dwelling on a biographical depiction of uniqueness, with the material trappings of his appearance and collected items (from carefully selected

[29] I use the term "aura" as Walter Benjamin discusses it, as the cultish veneration of a work of art postulating a mystical value in uniqueness. Benjamin states that "it is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" [Benjamin 217]).

khaki ensembles, calfskin knapsack and notebooks, Mont Blanc pens) forming a generalised "portraiture" that partially obscures the writings themselves. Writers who seem to focus mostly on the "myth" of Chatwin are Rushdie, O'Hanlon, and to a lesser extent the biographical works of Clapp, Murray, Ignatieff, Nick Shakespeare, Thubron, and Meanor. One particularly wry example of this commodificatory "mythopoeia" is the posthumous packaging of Chatwin's photos, extracts from notebooks, bits excised from published texts, and hagiographic commentary melded into a neat summation and, paradoxically, negation of Chatwin's own desire to keep moving: *Winding Paths* does not meander through so much as circumscribe the focal points of Chatwin's interest with a windy imagery and platitudinous captioning that makes for attractive coffee table fodder. Yet, valid commentaries on the sort of self-fashioning with which Chatwin textualises himself reside, even within these works, demonstrating the marketability of Chatwin's subjects when his "aura" hides a skeletal form.

Stories we tell about ourselves before we die.

In terms of purely textualising his self, in his "own words", the subjectivity of *The Songlines* should be compared to self-fashioning in his other work. *What Am I Doing Here*, "composed" from fragmentary performances throughout Chatwin's literary life immediately prior to his death, demonstrates particularly well a process of "nomadic" self-fashioning. A collection of "essays, portraits, meditations, travel writing and other unclassifiable Chatwinian forms of prose" written over many years, the text is nonetheless pulled together by the act of the subject writing in the self-revealing way that rings "true" of a literary portraiture even more self-conscious than that of *The Songlines* (Rushdie qtd. in *What Am I Doing Here* i). In the collected writings, we see

an attempt at a collected life, a "jubilant recognition" of the author defined against the interviewed "other": people, landscapes, art, experiences. "'My whole life,' said Chatwin in 1983, 'has been a search for the miraculous,'" [iii], and so, fittingly, these essays represent a "miraculously" poignant "life".

The form that *What Am I Doing Here* takes differs from a more traditional narrative representing a linear chronology. Instead, there is a startling resemblance to Michel de Montaigne's *Essays*: Chatwin's book is a series of studies, observations, "fragments, stories, profiles and travelogues" which ultimately make up an autobiographical self-portrait of the artist, such as readers find in Montaigne. [xi] (The sense of literary self-portraiture in the work of Montaigne and Chatwin is metonymically backed up by publishers' reproduction of the authors' likenesses on the cover of each book.) The structure, then, is based on thematic rather than overtly temporal considerations, a pattern shared by such other modern autobiographies as those of Sartre and Barthes (Eakin 4, 190). The combination of experiences portrayed also adds up to imply something like the gentle assertion of "honesty" and humility while maintaining "it is myself that I portray" (de Montaigne 23). The two authors even show a similar intent. Montaigne has:

> intended [his book] solely for the pleasure of my relatives and friends so that when they have lost me - which they soon must - they may recover some features of my character and disposition, and thus keep the memory they have of me more completely and vividly alive. (23).

The project of Chatwin is similar. He draws together experiences which span the whole of his short career of writing, but not wanting to "bore anyone with a confession: 'How I became a writer'" (xi). In their parallel endeavours, Chatwin and Montaigne produce an autobiographical legacy or memorial for an intimate circle of friends and family, for, like Montaigne, mortality is an imminent presence. Sharing

this stated intent, the publication of their work before their deaths nevertheless highlights the artifice of testamented literary lives.

The role of mortality as an impetus for collecting Chatwin's "life" is emphasised in the first section, entitled "written for friends and family" (1). The "life" of Chatwin is, here, very personally tied to physical sickness and a hypersensitivity to the body. His first words, "what am I doing here", become a regressive accusation of his body's failure, with a repetition of "I feel" categorising both the bodily changes caused by the unknown disease and the expression of helplessness (3). These first "stories" depict an awareness of the body as fundamental to memory and identity, in a similar way to the autobiographical writings of Barthes, Whitman, Oliver Sacks and John Updike (Eakin 14-5n, 184, 201). At a point in his life where his physical condition thrusts itself into his awareness by its very rebellion, Chatwin resists this threat to identity by mapping his experience on his body. Illnesses, whether the current symptoms (3), the "very rare Chinese fungus of the bone marrow" (5), or the malarial-connected "face covered with mosquito bites" which he paradoxically has "not noticed" (6), are a mapping of narrative on the body, correlative to the body's journeying across cartographic space.

From the focus on his physical body, Chatwin then turns to the mapping of his experience on his corpus. Whereas the shape of the book initially appears disperse and juxtapositional, a close examination reveals a conscious linkage between pieces. The structuring of his literary memories is shaped by thematic associations which act to bridge apparently diverse writings. For example, the diseased "present" experiences in hospital include an introduction to "Assunta". This compelling woman, a cleaner and char-lady, injects a dialogue of effervescent life into his ward, with her hilarious "snake" and her tear-inducing story of traumatic birth (3-8). From

this last focus on "family", Chatwin launches into a tale of his own family, a narrative based around the rejuvenating effects of travel, real and imagined, on his father (9-11). The link between this and the next section, "Strange Encounters", is implicitly this theme of travel. For the rest of the book we can find continuous tracework of thematic link, sometimes obscure ("Until My Blood is Pure" and "The Chinese Geomancer" are temporally and spatially divorced, yet there is a thematic link of the bizarre about them (42-55)), sometimes more obvious (as in the same Latin American journey progressing from "The Albatross" to "Chiloe" (343-52)). This overriding conscious control over the shape of the collection mediates the impact of each "story," incrementally constructing his autobiographical project through jumps between subjects of health and travel.

Another of the symptoms of the self aware fashioning of corpus in the way the book is packaged, are the tone of the "celebrity endorsements" which festoon the covers and front pages. These take on the role of testimonials or eulogies, but they also attest to these "choicest performances" fitting into a pattern of "realistic" self-representation. For instance, Kenneth McLeish writes of Chatwin:

> When I read *Songlines* I felt that his most engrossing character was himself, and that the unknown land which fascinated him remained, as it had been since childhood, his own imagination. That is true of this book too. There are a dozen autobiographical articles - about his father, about undergoing tests in hospital and his feelings about death, about his visit to the location where Herzog was filming *The Viceroy of Ouidah*. Pieces like these show us that human existence - at least as Chatwin sees it - is gloriously open-ended, unpredictable and exotic. The more he assures us that he is telling the truth, the more wonders we can expect. [ii]

This excerpt emphasises some of the inherent ambiguity of autobiography. Expectations of truth are set up against the need for things to be entertaining,

incredible, or "wondrous". Autobiography, like any other literary genre, needs to fulfil both in order to be truly successful.

Chatwin may be credited as being "better able to distinguish the fake from the genuine article" than most writers, yet this is not to say that he creates wholly "genuine articles" [iii]. When Chatwin asserts that all but one of the pieces are "my ideas", he is not only claiming a sense of ownership over the narrative, he is admitting to reworking it a little. Testament to this is Chatwin's titling of some pieces as "stories". Readers may accept that this could possibly be meant in a journalistic, documentary sense. Chatwin, though, admits, "however closely the narrative may fit the facts, the fictional process has been at work" [xi]. Of course, a "fictional process" creates all autobiography. It is, however, an admission that jeopardises some of the trust placed in the text by readers. I argue that this trust is actually re-earned through the reading experiences of the collection with its constant reference to documental forms of personal, geographical, artistic, literary and biographical histories; however, the ambiguity of the autobiographical project is "honestly" indicated from the beginning.

Salman Rushdie, as it happens, further emphasises this ambiguity of representation. Not hesitating to call *What Am I Doing Here* an autobiography, he nevertheless calls into doubt the "truth" of one of the stories. Comparing the written version of "Werner Herzog in Ghana" with a verbal rendering, Rushdie notes the exclusion of "juicier" elements from the page (*Imaginary Homelands* 238). However, despite this tongue in cheek selection, a self-censorship process designed to protect others' reputations (common, no doubt, to all but the most callous of remembrances); the autobiographical referentiality is still intact. As a "performance" which outlasts the life of the subject, Bruce Chatwin's collection retains a presence of self, if shaped

by experiences reflected off the "other", more tangibly defined by his *own* act of writing as the reader of his own experience.

The subjectivity of Chatwin's construction of himself as a "nomad", when examined against recent theory, highlights his role of reading himself through other texts. Within the disparate body of work that constitutes poststructuralist theory, criticism formerly focused on the humanist "author" tends to be replaced by a concern with "subjectivity". The limitations of assessing a text in terms of authorial control and intent are argued against by Barthes, who postulates the "death" of the "Author-God", and the birth of an ambiguous subject: the writing subject, and the subject of writing. This subject erases him-or-herself through the very process of writing; language, or discourse becomes a "dictionary" that opens up the text for the particular subjectivity of reading:

> [i]n the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered... a text is made of multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader. ("The Death of the Author" [*Image, Music, Text*]).

Chatwin's *The Songlines* functions within this pattern of reading of others' texts, as an analysis of discourse reveals. Barthes' attempt to deconstruct the cult of the author does not prove influential in suppressing the egocentric subjectivity of Chatwin; instead, Chatwin creates himself as the first "reader" of the text. The ambivalence of the text's reflexive concentration on the personae of "Chatwin" (as both a reader of other texts and the subject both highlighted and obviated by this collecting, and yet also subject to further readership that places the whole book in the specific and historical context of its publication), suggests layers of subjectivity that do not totally negate the role of "authorship". Instead a model of multiple author figures, mapped

around the subject-personae of Chatwin and the object-discipline of ethnography, may be substituted for the defunct "Author-God".

The Gospel according to St Bruce.

This multiplication of author figures can be explicated by use of Michel Foucault's "author-function": a useful critical term that both centres and de-centres the subjects of "Chatwin" within *The Songlines*, subjecting him to different levels of prominence dependant on the types of discourse mediated. Discourse, as defined by Foucault in "The Discourse on Language", is a formulation of language practice controlled by historically specific "institutions" where certain objects, ritualised circumstances, and privileged speaking positions are authorised and others excluded (216). A literary text like *The Songlines* can be examined for such groupings of knowledge, positions of discursive "power," intimations of "desire," and ritualised contextual understanding in the social and historical infrastructure, which either compete for dominance or adapt and confirm the previous controlling discourse (220). In terms of Foucauldian discursive analysis, Bruce Chatwin's "novel" can be seen to be a largely intertextual work, having a number of different authoritative voices, or "author-functions" (222-4). From Foucault's perspective, discourses themselves dictate an authorising perspective, and Chatwin can be seen to re-perform and subsume the utterances of particular types of speakers, even before he more obviously quotes them.

During the narrative orthodoxy of the first section of the book (compared to his later methodology), the subjectivities of "Chatwin" function, nevertheless, as easily recognisable focal points for the diverse discourses (artistic, historical, scientific, mythological, political) that a physical journey in the Australian Outback entails.

While other voices are introduced in this section, the practice of quotation and the recognizable diversity of author-functions is controlled and largely subsumed by the narrative practice of the Chatwin personae; Chatwin assumes the roles specific to mediating the particular strand of discourse (Chatwin as tourist, survivalist, fabulist, scientist, liberal, collector, journalist, and nomad). Of interest here is the recognition that, despite the proposed focus on the Aboriginal nomadic culture, the subject position of Chatwin is mostly built out of the quotation or mediation of other European author-functions, which de-centre the observer-participant stance prominent in other late twentieth-century ethnographic writing (which I analyse below); this is a contact zone where the experiential subjects of "Chatwin" are distanced from his Aboriginal subject-objects by the textuality of the disciplines he relies upon. Akin to the three palagi authors discussed in my first chapter, Chatwin's journeying begins on the pages of other Western authors, and I feel that his mode of displacement consistently relies on reference to a variety of "guidebooks" throughout his journey.

The second part's methodology, with its scattering of narrative cohesion, rampantly eclectic dispersal of quotation and treatment of place and time, and subsequent oscillation and apparent discontinuity of subjectivity, establishes this referentiality even further in the foreground. "Collection" may seem an inappropriate word for Chatwin's treatment of subjects, from this point: yet a kind of collection of unequal and disparate parts exists in the movement between these diverse subjects and the construction of a containing one, himself (Taylor 195-6). Chatwin's writing indicates shifts towards a postmodern dispersal of narrative by thematic association (aphorisms, quotations, interviews and anecdotes loosely linked by the notion of a "universal" Nomadology), yet consolidates this material clearly around the "I"/"eye" of Chatwin (as when he reads a story of himself, his experience, against his

textualised expectations hunting Kangaroos). In this way his, Chatwin's text and Chatwin as subject pivot on a role of selective commentary. I suggest that this view reflects back on the possessive method of his project instead of supporting his supposedly liberating message of a return to a "Golden Age". Crucially, I argue that, as a result of this practice, Chatwin does not fully offer his Aboriginal subject the status of an author-function due to his lack of Australian Aboriginal written material. Instead, he relies upon texts written about them, and about other nomadic practices collected in literary and literal travels. His subjective appropriation of nomadology, his recreating of himself as a nomadic subject, is finally ambivalent, residing as it does, between opposing discourses of nomadic existence, both contained in his text, and contextualised against it.

Blackface, White Past.

The creation of the "nomad" Chatwin can be seen to anticipate and textualise a problematic reception, and so pre-empt this with his own (textualised) reaction. In this way, Chapter 2 of *The Songlines* seems to function as a reaction to the end of the previous chapter and pre-emption of later passages, where the position of the author is questioned. An examination of these "criticisms" aids an understanding of Chatwin's constructed response. Firstly, there is an arbitrary categorisation by his fictionalised friend, "Arkady", used to deflect suspicion, but which also acts to limit the status of Chatwin:

> He was on the point of explaining when an Aboriginal girl came in with a stack of papers....
>
> [H]er smile fell away at the sight of a stranger.
>
> Arkady lowered his voice. He had warned me earlier how Aboriginals hate to hear white men discussing their 'business'.

'This is a *Pom*,' he said to the secretary. 'A *Pom* by the name of Bruce.' (5)

The distrust implicit in this meeting, suggesting connections to historical mistreatment and appropriation of private cultural "business" produces a difficulty for Chatwin to contend with: how to understand and write privileged "insider" knowledge when so easily marked as an outsider? Compounding this, distrust and potential exclusion from his subject is not limited to contact with Aboriginals. Another example, more readily voicing the charge of Chatwin being an intruding, ignorant "outsider," which threatens to distance Chatwin from a position of any authority, occurs when a white, political activist challenges Chatwin: "'And what makes you think you can show up from Merrie Old England and clean up on sacred knowledge?'" (35) The association with the imperial practices of the "Poms" in Australia also potentially "contaminates" the author's credentials with complicity in such unpopular events as the British Atomic Tests. An old communist, living in squalor in the outback reminisces about the Tests while gazing at Chatwin accusingly: "'...Her Majesty's Cloud. Sir Anthony-stuck-up-in-Eden's Cloud!... [T]hey let off the device - how I love that word "device"! - and the Cloud, instead of sailing out to sea to contaminate the fishes, sailed inland to contaminate *us*!'"(93). Thus, the subject position of Chatwin is threatened doubly when he is labelled a Pom. A Pom is implicitly distant from the realities of Australia, an outsider, and is of dubious character, being representative of a power oppressive to both black and white Australia.

The ambivalence implicit not only in his "Pom"-hood, but also as a more generalised European "enlightened" figure, is highlighted by Ruth Brown, who sees Chatwin's book as a denial of imperialism, in the tradition of Mary Louise Pratt's aesthetic "anti-conquest" narrative (Brown 5-13; Pratt 38-9). Pratt's category labels various travel texts as crypto-imperialist. These works, by scientists and artists who

hide their complicity in practices of colonisation through more subtle narrative manifestations of subjective authority, offer an apparently "benign and abstract appropriation of the planet" by means parallel to more "overtly imperial articulations of conquest, conversion, territorial appropriation, and enslavement" (38-9). Resisting this view of Chatwin's work, though, I admit that he does show some awareness of the issues of imperialism, and (as he is not able to totally exclude this discourse) seeks to dispute the role of "Pom" imposed on him by placing it against other roles. Chatwin engages with his colonialist association partially by undermining the authority of those voices that question his status by satirical characterisation, but the importance of resolving the issue of Chatwin's position is acknowledged even in their inclusion.

Chapter 2 is, then, all the more important in its dealing with such concerns by providing both a sympathetic background and yet an assertion of difference that provides a space for writing. In this chapter, Chatwin disputes the label of "Pom" by deconstructing the stereotype genealogically, and seeks to provide credentials as a fellow "nomad" with a particular affinity to Aboriginals: fashioning himself as a "moving" subject. Despite physical distance, Chatwin asserts a sympathy and knowledge of Australia from a young age that both unsettles the assumption of "pom"-ish distance while also reasserting his cultural difference. The author's early awareness of "Australia" is constructed on a particular set of signs that are transmitted through colonial sources (packaged images like the commodified eucalyptus of his inhaler, pictures of sheep, red land and "matt black" people, and anecdotal narratives that cement the stereotypes of uncouth white farmers and spiritual natives). Yet, the experiential comparison of the transitory young Chatwin, literally shunted from one destination to another in war-time England, with an "Aboriginal family *on the move*"

(emphasis added) asserts a romantic discourse of psychological association that somehow transcends the stereotypes. This is constructed as a kind of mirrored recognition, and an age-determined association with innocence: looking into the photo of the Aboriginal family at a small, strolling boy, Chatwin says, "I identified myself with him" (7). Other objects (including other photographs) also act in a similar, metonymic manner as signifiers of discourses that distance Chatwin from a singular "pom"-ness. Thus the solid object of his suitcase provides an author-function symbolically containing an anti-bomb discourse just as it sheltered the child-persona of the author from the Blitz (which anticipates and authenticates a resistance to the culpability of British atomic tests in the Australian "desert"). The genealogical author-functions of anecdotal family histories and memorabilia (well-travelled photographs and hats, the "vulva"-like West Indian conch, and the special exoticism of certain cartographically-suggestive words (7-8)) also suggest a level of internationalism at odds with "pom"-ness. Melded aesthetically to literary objects from his childhood (including various travel "texts" and an appropriative custodianship of Shakespeare that displaces his work from the heartland of England[30]) the tales of his wandering forebears are distilled into a kind of constructed meta-author-function: a Chatwin who acts as a voyaging cultural reader, at once attempting a divorce from certain historical responsibilities yet forming opinions based on aesthetic knowledges that have been constructed by imperial history. The model of Chatwin's book is similar in this way to that of the empiricist ethnography of Malinowski. Both form hypotheses from afar based on previous texts in a "poetic" manner, and only then engage in the process of experiential observation: a methodology that results in an ambivalence of subjectivity and a self-reflexivity of

[30] Chatwin inhabits the landscape of William Shakespeare figuratively, acting as a guide to his tomb and speculating on the local (Stratford) inspiration for settings of his plays, only to translate such

author-function (Carter 106-7). Chapter 2 displays the central position of Chatwin's multiple roles: as a moving subject, dispersing the foci of the narrative on various other figures only to have them refracted back, constructing an idealised view of nomadology epitomised by the example of Chatwin as literary nomad.

Glossed movements.

Another way of understanding Chatwin's "nomadic" book is according to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "heteroglossia". An awareness of heteroglossia is an acknowledgement of the "polyphony of social and discursive forces", the exhaustive context that shapes any possible utterance in a dialogic manner (the particular utterance having to be assessed against "heteroglot" factors which affect meaning [Holquist 69-70]). A number of simultaneous factors are crucial in producing particular meanings in an utterance and the consumption of that utterance, so that in Bakhtin's view literature must be considered a cultural activity of dialogue that reflects back on the "historical" particularity of subject matter and situation of utterance and of the audience's reception. The dialogic nature of an utterance can be broken up into several different connections. First, an utterance manifests a multiple simultaneity of meaning between the prescribed code and the transgressive differences of the particular. Second, a diachronic and synchronic (historical and spatial) awareness of semantic difference can be explicated. Lastly, in terms of the relationships of subjects constituent to the utterance, the plurality of dialogues between author, text and audience must be emphasized (Holquist 68-9. *The Songlines*' methodology enhances this dialogic relationship with a textuality that displays a concern with defining a shifting subject and situation. There are a number of dialogic relations that can be perceived in the text: the dialogue of the particular

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activities to disparate settings and traditions (eg Shakespeare as anti-archaeologist in Hungary).

(and "fictionalised") with several "institutional" discourses; an attempt at a "hybrid" nomadology of form and content; dialogic transactions of the particular and the cultural; and an inclusive, "carnivalesque" forum of presentation and readership that perhaps blurs the relation between utterance and reception.

The figure of the primary "expert", presented in a fictionalised version of Chatwin himself, exhibits a relation of dialogism with several "institutions" of discourse. Following the Foucauldian notion of discourse, as a formulation of language practice controlled by historically specific "institutions", *The Songlines* can be shown as such groupings of knowledge, positions of discursive "power" in the social and historical infrastructure, which either compete for dominance or adapt and confirm the previous controlling discourse. Despite some apparent stylistic differences between the two halves of the book, both sections share a diversity of narrative elements that the apparent unity of authorial perspective only partially obscures. The selective process of Chatwin, the particular "author-function" that defines the attributes of his own, particular discourse, may appear to affirm a sense of "newness" or authenticity to his work. However, by concentrating on the discourses quoted or adapted from prior sources, Chatwin's text assumes the status of an intertextual, literary travelogue, relying as much on mimesis as "originality".

Chatwin's "author-function" mediation of other authors and discourses can be formalised into three particular practices. First, Chatwin's assimilation or acknowledgment of other discourse is notable in quotation of other discourses and authors. For example, this can be seen in his primary concern with depicting "nomadology" as part of a tradition that combines the poetic discourse of "the Golden Age" with ethnographic and anthropological speculation on pastoralist and hunter-gatherer wanderings. These discourses can be attributed variously, from the

"transdiscursive" authorship of Hesiod, to more modern "authors" such as Strehlow, Levi-Strauss, "Father Flynn", "Arkady", Lorenz and Brain. Some of the prominent discourses sampled by Chatwin in this way are mythical, historical (imperial, settler, and postcolonial), cartographical, ethnographical and art historical. Second, associated with the above and in competition to aspects of "originality" that some critics see in his work, Chatwin adopts models of discourse for his own narrative exposition. His *treatise* on nomadology is modelled after Diderot and Montaigne's style (in *Jacques Le Fataliste* and *Essais*): scholarly, aphoristic, dialectic and dialogic. Other generic models of discourse include travelogue, novel, interview, biography, autobiography, and collection. Third, the prismatic role of the "author" himself also functions to reflect other's discourses. A prime example of this is Chatwin's role as ethnographic and aesthetic collector, which functions as a re-examination and reviewing of the discursive practices of explorer-naturalists after Linnaeus (this can be related to Pratt's vision of a scientific adjunct to imperialist discursive practice, using naming and cataloguing to systematize the power of European cultural "superiority" [Taylor 195-211)]. Chatwin's position is particularly ambivalent here, in that he is read by some as an unwilling (or unconscious) embodiment of imperial power, a British "tourist" to a former colony, but also seeks to adopt Aboriginal discourse into the universal marginalia of "nomadology" and place himself as a similar fringe subject.

Staged dialogue.

Chatwin's "novel" is largely intertextual, in this dialogic way, having a number of different "authors" who represent these particular knowledges. A primary dialogic relationship is established on the first page of the book with the idealised character

Arkady Volchok. Arkady's presence provides the very possibility of a dialogic form of address, a second major voice in a book of dialogue. However, he also represents a dialogue with heteroglot meanings. His heteroglossic textuality is shown in his function as an ethnographic expert of the particular: a provider of privileged knowledges and Aboriginal land rights issues. He also functions as an intellectual insider who remains at a dialogical distance from the perspective of white Australia given his unusual background (and thereby provides a commonality of "superior" sensitivity with the author). As such, he is the author's "mole" into the sensitive and politically charged specific locations of the "songlines". These roles, and their represented knowledges, are complicated by Arkady's having been based on a "real" person, enabling dialogism in reading. The decision to fictionalise Chatwin's real guide emphasizes the discourse that is associated with this character, from the significance of the name "Arkady" (with its resonance of a conceptual and realistic place in narrative tradition[31]), to the wider political, social and historical implications of his supplied utterances in general. This difference of signification challenges the represented normal, everyday tone of discussion, and serves to direct an informed reader's querying towards which narrated aspects and opinions are consistent with the "real" man and which are acts of ventriloquism. The real "Arkady" can also read himself against or into the persona in the book, as can those who know him in both lives, complicating the significance of the "character".

Likewise, the attachment of Chatwin to the earlier ethnographer Strehlow presents a dialogism of more complexity in the reception of the text than was apparent in its production. Chatwin effectively modelled his own narrative, and gained a substantial part of his preliminary understanding of the "songlines", from the work of

[31] As in the fabled setting of the Greek Golden Age and the actual setting of one of Pausanias' travels.

this ethnographer. This debt is acknowledged in Chatwin's text, both formally and informally (by following in his footsteps), and can also be seen in the partial transference of his figure into "Arkady". However, the "real" Strehlow was a figure of as much notoriety as fame in his field, with his close relationship with the Aranda of Central Australia producing both exemplary ethnographic and linguistic study and acrimony over the disputed guardianship of numerous sacred objects, a dispute that has recently led to a federal raid and seizure of the objects (Shakespeare 349). In effect, Chatwin's association with Strehlow contains levels of heteroglossic significance that affects the status of his text: by claiming Strehlow's discourse Chatwin alienated many people in the process of his own research, and metaphorically added another level of dialogism to the charges of cultural appropriation (Shakespeare 418). However, Mudrooroo, in his history of *The Indigenous Literature of Australia*, seems to paraphrase much of the same material as Chatwin on the mythology, traditions and religious significance of "songlines" (even using the term "songlines", as opposed to the more usual "dreamings") and provides a largely positive background to Strehlow's involvement in Aranda culture and general erudition as a missionary, ethnographer, linguist and writer; yet he dismisses Chatwin fleetingly as one of the contemporary foreign writers "seeing the Other as a repository of wisdom,... in effect the writer becomes a Prometheus entering the Other to steal her wisdom and bring it back to [his] community" (Mudrooroo 64). The performer of cultural differentiation seems particularly vulnerable even when his project shares some of the same concerns of his critics. A further irony could be noted in the subsequent attempted destabilising of Mudrooroo's position, with the discovery of his own indigeneity as a constructed subject position. The authority of who can speak on a certain subject, then, remains a contentious one, open to argument.

The Natives were wrestlers.

Chatwin's textual interpretation of third and fourth-world cultures should also be examined against other ethnographic practice, and must be informed with by the notion of Aborigines as fully able to narrate their own positions and wrestle with outsider representations. Looking at *The Songlines* as a work of ethnography demonstrates the significance of the points of intersection and divergence with "institutionalised" ethnographic methods and calls to attention the separate claims to "authority" that Chatwin constructs. For most of the twentieth century, certain ethnographic practices have been given a more privileged reception by the academic discipline of anthropology. As James Clifford notes, though, many anthropologists' assumptions of objectivity and faithful representation of the subject have been recently criticised as arbitrary and ideologically constructed: many of the relativist notions of culture on which practice is based display value structures that dissolve under changing analytic practice and ethnography. This revision of "ethnographic authority" should also be understood as part of a deconstruction of the discourse of "colonial" power (Clifford, *Predicament* 22). Ethnography is a political activity as much as a scientific one. *The Songlines* is an explicitly heteroglossic text that mixes anthropology with more explicitly fictional constructions and interpretations in a postcolonial political context. As such, the text affords a useful interrogation into the attempts to mix different methods of interpreting and representing the ethnographic subject, in order to first defamiliarise and then refamiliarise cultural difference.

Different models of ethnography are ever-present in society at large, and in different cultures and at different times these have been given varying degrees of "authority". In the cultural climate present at the production of *The Songlines,* many

models of ethnography were available for Chatwin to sample. These are represented in the inclusion of "writings", mythical, poetic and "realistic", that document the other side of Western contact zones, practices of writing "in the field" by Western agents (travel writers, missionaries, traders and administrators) and second-hand interpretations of culture by spatially-distant scholars (Pratt). Among these, auto-ethnographic "writing" is currently becoming more generally realised as a significant form, including the symbolic representation apparent in the paintings of supposedly pre-literate societies. Explicating and collaboratively encouraging such projects in Australia, Stephen Muecke is an exemplary figure who presents autoethnography as a tool to encourage dialogue between the different narrative modes and representational histories of Australians; in works like *Textual Spaces*, he attempts to open up room for the revaluation of Aboriginal representational modes within critical awareness, and in *Reading the Country* dialogues with Paddy Roe represent an attempted autoethnographic history of place and narrative movement. Yet Muecke is also aware that in his position narrating dialogues with Aboriginal culture, the inclusion of himself as a subject mediating, interpreting and "framing" this culture remains a problem not easy to resolve (*Reading the Country* 231).

Chapter six of *The Songlines* demonstrates just this kind of representational bind through an attempt at providing an insight into cultural mediation and the transactions and translation of cultural artefacts. Chatwin represents these concerns, by proxy, in the exegesis of an aboriginal dreaming on canvas, a packaging of narrative that describes the fluidity between spoken "discourse" and the symbolic mapping of this in art. The chapter features multiple exchanges, economic, aesthetic and cultural, that demonstrate a model of transaction that the book relies on. In this chapter, the narrator-figure of Chatwin observes the activities of Enid Lacey, bookstore-owner and

Aboriginal art-seller, mediating and negotiating a sale between an artist, "Stan", and two impressionable American tourists:

> [t]he customers were a pair of American tourists, who were deciding on which of the two colour-plate books to buy. The man had a tanned and freckled face and wore blue Bermudas and a yellow sports shirt. The woman was blonde, nice-looking but a little drawn, and dressed in a red batik smock printed with Aboriginal motifs. The books were *Australian Dreaming* and *Tales of the Dreamtime.*
>
> Old Stan laid the package on Mrs Lacey's desk.[...]
>
> "Idiot!" Mrs Lacey raised the pitch of her voice, "I've told you a thousand times. The man from Adelaide doesn't want Gideon's paintings. He wants yours."
>
> Arkady and I kept our distance, at the back, by the shelves of Aboriginal studies. The Americans had perked up, and were listening.
>
> "I know there's no accounting for taste," Mrs Lacey continued. "He says you're the best painter at Popanji. He's a big collector. He should know."
>
> "Is that so?" asked the American man.
>
> "It is," said Mrs Lacey. "I could sell anything Mr Tjakamarra sets his hand to."
>
> "Could we see?" asked the American woman. "Please?"[...]
>
> The painting was about four foot by three and had a background of pointillist dots in varying shades of ochre. In the centre there was a big blue circle with several smaller circles scattered around it. Each circle had a scarlet rim around the perimeter and, connecting them, was a maze of wiggly, flamingo-pink limes the looked a bit like intestines.[...]
>
> "The honey-ant," she turned to the Americans, "is one of the totems at Popanji. This painting's a honey-ant Dreaming."
>
> "I think it's beautiful," said the American woman, thoughtfully.[...]
>
> "But I can't see any ants in this painting," the man said.[...]
>
> "The painting shows the journey of the Honey-ant Ancestor."

"Like it's a route-map?" he grinned. "Yeah, I thought it looked like a route map." (27-8)

Combining her knowledge of tribal customs and mythology, the celebratory-figure of the artist's presence, and the sense of the tourist's desire for primitivist "authenticity", Lacey is able to negotiate an economic settlement that parallels a cultural transaction. Although portrayed as adopting a sympathetically paternalistic manner, and seeming to act in the artists' interests by negotiating a good price, Lacey's persuasive use of the cultural background of the artist as "packaging" for his work seems to offer the pictures as metonymic commodifications of that culture. This can be seen in the skilful manipulation of the art from its initial impact (to the Americans) as exotically abstract, through the assumption of the celebratory-status of the artist (authenticated by the commercially-based expertise of shadowy dealer "in Adelaide") and consciousness of appropriated aesthetic taste and displayed wealth that a purchase could provide, through to the transaction of specific knowledges that the text of the painting represents (29-31). Muecke's explanation of art as the symbolic written language of the Aborigines is reflected, here, in Stan's verbal interpretation of the canvas for the benefit of the "illiterate" tourists:

> Speech and writing have always been understood as different forms that language can take. These different forms are valued differently, and there are quite a few prejudices which have been handed down in the traditions of Western thought about these things. One of these causes us to over-value literacy and hence induce shame and stigma for those who are "illiterate".[...] "[I]lliteracy" is a misused word, that those people considered "illiterate" have always been reading or writing in the broad sense, and may only be ignorant of one set of techniques – reading and writing script. (Muecke *Reading the Country* 61).

Muecke's point that "reading" is a cultural skill that varies between specific societies is illustrated by the need for explanation, with the Americans in the position of rapt

students. However, I argue that their purchase is based more on the associations with the "primitive" value of the artefact backed up by such a narrative. Stan gives the explanation *after* the agreed purchase, suggesting that the specific cultural value of the artefact has already been translated into economic value before a significant level of cultural understanding has been attained. Similarly, the attention paid to Stan's performance seems, I think, to anticipate a primitivist reperformance by the Americans that will take place in their living room. In this way, the purchase is more an economic transaction in exchange for the "aura" of primitivist knowledge than an actual learning experience. Despite the amused, "in-the-know", presence of Chatwin, the role that he himself takes in the production of his book, as a similar cultural mediator, is open to a similar deconstruction (Michaels).

"In the middle, somewhat elevated."

The more institutionalised models of ethnography are also open to deconstruction. Within the socio-cultural arm of anthropological studies, the "participant-observer" model has been bestowed with the most respect in the discipline throughout the majority of the twentieth century. This respect relies on the acceptance of its claims to a supposedly more scientific basis of objectivity coupled (paradoxically) with its focus on a reasonable depth of experience, "in the field" (compared to other methods, amateur and professional), followed by an exegetic process of interpretation and writing on the field, from the outside, turning the observed culture into an explained "text". Embodied in certain, persuasively argued texts, and consistent with trends in the social sciences from the nineteenth century towards professionalism and empirical methodologies, the "participant-observer" model was established as the "exemplar".

James Clifford uses the example of Malinowski, and his major study, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific,* who used his writing as an argument for privileging this approach to the ethnographic subject. As an academically trained, objective and "scientific" professional, Malinowski represents a figure of the anthropologist who has been attributed "authority" both in the field and in written projects which appear afterwards, whereas others have been dismissed as too "interested". The authority of the participant-observer is in this case demonstrated by a concern with spending a considerable (but unspecified) duration living in "the field", learning the language and culture of the subjects, compiling extensive archives of data (including photographs). In addition, the textualising of the research period shows a particular intention of answering the questions of "verification and accountability" with an aesthetic construction of an "engaging narrative... use of the active voice in the 'ethnographic present', [and] illusive demonstrations of the author's participation in scenes of Trobriand life" (Michaels 29).

Hence, the participant-observer model consists of several, reasonably consistent activities: validating the "persona" of the field worker, allowing the image of expertise to be embodied in a participating celebrity; relying on their own command of the vernacular and so supposedly doing away with further translation problems of an intermediary; an emphasis on observation as the primary medium, which valorised tropes of description (including, of course, photographic "proof"); the application of convenient theoretical models to many different situations; a specific focus on individual institutions or practices (what Geertz calls the tendency towards "microscopic" focus [249]); and the application of the specific findings to a "whole" vision of the culture studied (Clifford "On Ethnographic Authority" [*Predicament* 29-31]).

Many of these claims to authority seem to be potentially incompatible. For example, expertise seems to be based on having the kind of authority over the subject matter that is based on participation and acceptance, with an ability to transcribe experience faithfully. Yet alongside this, theories developed elsewhere need to be applied, and the "author" needs to remain detached enough to provide an awareness of difference or specificity to the study which is to be shared in the common language of the observer and the presumed audience. The dual position of being both inside and outside the subject culture is not so easily resolved as the "monological" representations of many texts suggest (Clifford, *Predicament* 92-114, examining the example of Malinowski). For a start, the assumption of being "inside" a culture, after a limited period (whether it is of a duration of months or years) should be considered a relative abstraction, and not an absolute claim to "authority". Margaret Mead's work demonstrates how duration can be truncated, practising only relatively short stays and focussing on very "specific domains". Yet it is still possible to argue that, despite its lack of immersion, Mead's study technique fits into the model of a participant-observer methodology. The criterion of accuracy in study is made problematic in a project such as *Coming Of Age in Samoa,* where the vision of Samoa is skewed towards a simplistic, idyllic portrait, and an overly generalised version of America with which it is compared. Many anthropologists are critical of such a limited practice of "dwelling" in the field, and would seem to invalidate its particular claims of participation. (Marcus and Fischer 158-9).

However, it can be demonstrated that the principle of participation is fraught with problems in spite of a more lengthy duration of study. The example of a famous picture of Malinowski's project demonstrates this. The photograph depicting the anthropologist's tent in the middle of a Trobiand village is part of the assumption of

participation, a visible statement that matches a claim of "I was there". However, at the same time it demonstrates the limits to inclusion in the studied society. The presence of the anthropologist in the subjects' midst does not equate with mutual understanding or even, necessarily, with acceptance. Although the depiction of the tent substantiates a presence, a placement within the "field", its very cultural signification allies it to the "outside". Its presence, then, should be considered "insular": within the field, yet not necessarily part of it. In just such a way, anthropologists still retain the status of "outsiders" despite attempts to participate in their studied culture; the awareness of small pieces of cultural knowledge, from the diverse language and practices experientally observed, can only be a partial description of the complex operations that that culture negotiates within itself and to the "outside". In this way, "participant-observers" must construct their texts, to an extent, on interpretive guesswork (Geertz 245).

This fashioning also pivots on the ambivalent role of the anthropologist's informant. Despite the widespread denigration in the twentieth century academy of "privileged informants" in favour of anthropologists' participation and experiences, and the supposedly more objective collection of data by "survey", informants are central to the experiences of the anthropologist, and for explanations of meaning in behaviour and custom. Yet the further mediation and translation of the transcribed experience often removes the voice of the informant from the final interpretation. Monological authority assumes a godlike narrative stance, with the particular context of informant utterance removed in favour of a generalised subjectification of the studied culture. As Clifford points out, such a removal of the polyphonic traits of ethnography in this method of study tends to obscure the historical factors of the observed environment, sacrificing a diachronic understanding of cultural formation

and change to the immediate impact of the "ethnographic present" (*Predicament* 259). Also, while the unspecified, reasonably undelineated, empiricism of this approach lends it some flexibility of practice, its definition and authorisation relies on very subjective judgements of what practices can fall into this model. The model of "participant-observation" and its claims to authority are thus asserted anew with every example of its practice, yet never thoroughly defined.

Open for Business.

Yet despite some of these apparent problems, the model of participant-observer persists as a dominant mode of ethnographic methodology, and some critics have noted Chatwin's apparent divergence from its methods, while maintaining a similar focus on subject matter, as a weakness. Eric Michaels, as an ethnographer with an obvious interest in maintaining the "authority" of his field in terms of his concerns about its inaccurate mediation, sees a need for "ethnographic corrections" of the "fictional" elements in *The Songlines,* going so far as to deride the book as "para-ethnography". By this term, Michaels suggests Chatwin practices a "disavowal of anthropology [that] is neither wholly honest nor particularly accurate." Chatwin, he asserts, is "very much in dialogue with the profession" but sullies his text with the "unverifiable, irrational, irreplaceable" (176).

Another critic, Graham Huggan, also emphasizes the "fictional" elements of Chatwin's ethnographical work. However, in contrast to Michaels, Huggan demonstrates the significance of "fiction" as integral to the ethnographic process. Huggan is aware of a precedent of viewing ethnography as a "discursive process,... ethnography as *narrative*"; citing Clifford Geertz, whose description of ethnography is of an "interpretative" field relying on "thick description", he emphasises the

narrative techniques involved in both observing and relating the cultural field of the ethnographer into a text (Huggan, "Maps" 57). Geertz goes so far as to designate the work of the ethnographer as invention, crafting "'something fashioned'" or "fictions", in its original etymological resonance, a position mirrored in Clifford's appraisal of ethnographic self-fashioning (Geertz 245).

The "fictional" element perceived in *the Songlines* is indicative of slippages between modes of representing authority in ethnography, with a scientific tone of assertion being complicated by other voices, the polyphony of the text previously identified. Chatwin's art may seem to have some similarities to that of Clifford's Malinowski, with both presenting their material in an "engaging narrative" that suggests at least some element of fictional fashioning in both the perception of event and its translated rendering onto the page (both processes dependent on the presence of narrative to give shape to the event). The perceived difference in such texts can also be compressed in the comparison of each author's writing practice, exemplifying the practice as culturally "outside". Despite the supposed engagement with experience "in the field" that is reinforced with an emphatic practice of self-referencing, both authors are determined to fashion a theory outside of it, beforehand and afterwards. This theoretical stance echoes an empirical practice, yet Malinowski's *pre* interpretation of the field is suggested by Paul Carter, who notes the anthropologist's formation of hypotheses that shape his project substantially before the sojourn in the field (Carter 106-7). Clifford notes the practice of writing, in the distant location of the Canary Islands significantly *after* the experience in the field, alters Malinowski's interpretation of the field experience, introducing a degree of stylistic conformity to the text more consistent with a teleological patterning than the field journals suggest. In other words, Malinowski's attempts to produce a

monological text, attempting to freeze the divergent discourses of experience into a unified textual interpretation, can be traced to this practice of writing outside the direct influence of the field. Chatwin's work was conceived in a similar background, with the production of his hypothesis for "A Nomadic Alternative" produced many years before his travels in Australia, and his monastic writing practice in Greece of *The Songlines.* As early as 1969 Chatwin drafted a letter proposing a book focusing on nomads, with a chapter by chapter outline which addresses many of the same issues finally dealt with in *The Songlines*, which the chapter titles and breakdown signal (e.g. "Why wander," "ARCHAIC HUNTERS," "Civilisation," "Herdsmen," "Nostalgia for Paradise" [Chatwin, *Anatomy*]). Well over a decade between planning and execution, *The Songlines* nevertheless revisits many of his stated topics. Likewise, Chatwin's secluded writing practice functions to complete a process, providing time for the interpretation and referencing of experience into the pre-planned project.

Despite the apparent pre- and post-determining factors of editorial and methodological selection in Chatwin and Malinowski, however, the texts of both authors also display considerable "openness". Umberto Eco's definition of an "open work" emphasizes the elements of ambivalence and indeterminacy at play in many contemporary texts. Using the examples of Joyce and Brecht, Eco suggests that many twentieth-century texts operate in a symbolic field that leaves them "open" or "unresolved", allowing for a greater freedom of interpretation (Eco 9-11). This is achieved through the inclusion of a polyphonic element of narratives and data displayed outside the direct explanation of the authors. Malinowski's profusion of unexplained data, possibly included to demonstrate the quantity of research, nevertheless displays a looseness of writing that allows for an "openness" of

interpretation. Chatwin's juxtaposition of dialogues, first person narration, associative quotation, and symbolic dispersal of his own speaking voice into other characters, displays an intential openness that is "nomadic" in its ranging structure, allowing many different insertion points for the reader. Chatwin's "openness" is one that is specifically structured, in terms of dialogic narrative, to allow a controlled staging of ethnographic issues.

The evidence that this high degree of narrative control in *The Songlines* can result in Chatwin's claim to openness can be measured against other anthropological works that are "populist" in style. For example, Dianne Bell's *Daughters of the Dreaming* is indicative of a piece of more conventional ethnographic research packaged as a first-person narrative, in effect, often seeming to be at odds with itself. Bell appears to "naturalise" the interpretative function of her work, submerging the scholarly intentions of her work in a narrative style that reduces the facet of observation, in a way that contrasts with Chatwin's presence. Although both authors place themselves within the field of anthropology, Bell is in the process of moving out whereas Chatwin is moving in. The division between her initial hypothesis and "participant" experience and the narrative modification of the text is apparent in the contrast between the scholarly framework of the text, and the informal, "chatty" representation of Bell's persona in the narrative. Even when, in the early part of her book, Bell brings up aspects of her authorising discourse, anthropological methodology, she takes pain to stress the day-to-day experiences that undercut doctrinal reassurance:

> [t]o admit to one's inadequacies, to how fumbling one was in the local language, to how socially inept, how angry and upset one became, is simply not the done thing. Instead, one speaks at an anecdotal level at anthropological gatherings, and in writing of the experience one constructs manuals which discuss establishing "rapport," methodologies and coping with "culture shock." But it stands to reason that no amount of techniques or

> fieldwork strategies will induce an elderly person to divulge secret material to a young person of the opposite sex. Who we are, how we behave in the field, the resources (both personal and material) which we bring to bear, our research design, interests, skills and prejudices, are all elements in our fieldwork. (9-10)

While this depiction of her subjectivity seems very frank, and establishes the point that the ideal of fieldwork is exactly that, a *field* in which the participant is a constituent part, the distancing aspect of observation is less specifically dealt with. The packaging of this work emphasizes the assimilatory practice of the writer over the "club" culture and specialised knowledge of her discipline in order to affect"openness" for the ordinary public.

Whereas Chatwin approaches ethnography from the other side, turning anecdote into significant material observations, this also works as a device that encourages readability alongside establishing authority. For example, when he reports on his meeting with Lorenz, the "father of ethology," this meeting is reported anecdotally, but the facts related in the dialogue (about aggression and the role of territorial behaviour) set up a field of inquiry and connections to other ethnographic observations which are taken up at disparate parts of his text (121-5). Chatwin is also more obvious in his self-referencing through these observations, fashioning a significant identity for himself out of elements of his narrative positioning. He makes specific claims for authority that connect him very strongly to this aspect of the participant-observer model, placing himself in the middle of his text as both catalyst and reviewer of connections made, emphasizing his "interestedness" in the material covered. Other aspects of his methodology also grow out of or seem to address themselves against this ethnographic practice.

Chatwin's connection to a theory based in practice seems to fit into Geertz's model of the ethnographic practice. Geertz' vision of a discipline that is formulated on specific situations explains how the formation of synechdocal models of theory in ethnography are often resisted by the tendency to situation-specific interpretation (Geertz 251-3. One of the central principles of the participant-observer model, that of applying theory to cultural interpretations may, therefore, is distrusted by some working in the field. Certainly, Chatwin expresses distaste with a few anthropologists and ethnographers that he sees pushing particular theories that *he* disagrees with. As a consequence, these "characters" are punished through a use of parody or seemingly logical reductivism.

Upping the "anti-".

In such a way, Chatwin can be seen to develop "anti-informants": figures that contrast with the normative informant roles in providing cultural "insights". The function of these characters is to personify the elements of misinformation or secreted knowledge that the author encounters, and provide contrasts with the more open, "enlightened" informants of the text. In this way, they provide material for an internal cultural critique of oppositional placement, whereby Chatwin can contain, deflect and incorporate these "barriers" into his discourse dialectically (just as we have seen Theroux attempt to divert and displace potential criticism of racism.) In such figures as "Kidder," the "Gym-bore", apparently distilled from the real anthropologist-activist, Phillip Toyne, and "Hanlon", based on the unionist Jack Clancy (Shakespeare 417-18), Chatwin constructs agents that are portrayed as rebuttals to his enquiries, and he deflates the concerns these "characters" represent by a process of defamiliarisation. Chatwin uses a Brechtian technique of alienating the "facts" from the "natural" tone

of their transmission, thereby undermining the authority of these anti-informants. Acting in the role of host to the writer, Toyne had attempted to explain the protocols of initiation into sacred aboriginal knowledges, giving examples of abuses by other visiting researchers and thus rein-in Chatwin's inappropriate questioning of Aboriginal custodians (Shakespeare 417-18). By means of these activities Toyne may be considered by the author to have been somewhat of an impediment to Chatwin's project, and Chatwin's reaction displaces Toyne's concerns by refracting them into more "petty" semblances. The character of "Kidder" is described as a "Gym-bore", a lover of science-fiction, "a rich boy from Sydney" possessing a harsh voice with a "shrill, upward note on which he ended his sentences [that] gave each of his statements, however dogmatic, a tentative and questionable bias" (34-5, 46-8). By means of this description, Chatwin constructs a particularly negative set of qualities for his anti-informant: narcissistic shallowness and low-brow taste are coupled with privilege, an active dogmatism is founded on a "questionable" rationale, he is portrayed as a barely-tolerated outsider, and his good looks and sexuality combine to further undermine his political resolve. In a fictionally one-sided verbal sparring, Chatwin effectively destroys Kidder's credibility, portraying a clumsiness and crassness in the activist's argument for protecting Aborigines' rights to their preservation of private knowledges, and making preposterous the notion of a white protectorate of such rights. Chatwin dismisses Kidder tellingly with a put-down that connects him to the other "types" of bigoted white Australians proximate in the text who stand as anti-informant barriers to connections with his Aboriginal subjects. When the reader is sardonically informed that Kidder "would have made an excellent policeman," (46) this resonates with the other representations of the police in the text: a pulp-fiction loving policeman who describes Aboriginal genetic inferiority (136-7);

racially delineated patterns of law-enforcement that demands a rigorous investigation for a dead white man but let off the murderer of a "coon" (100-4); and how police patrols are portrayed as historical agents of genocide (40).[32]

The marriage of white land-activists with white racists, an association that should be surprising, is "solemnized" by yoking together different criteria of negation to Chatwin's project, fashioning a common front by the same subversive narrative tactics. This achievement is a type of refamiliarisation, an apparently antithetical alliance "naturalised" as a particular stereotype: the clumsy, officious, bigoted white "cop". This kind of process can also be seen, with some differences, in the case of "Hanlon". He is also portrayed as an opposing, and hence unreliable, source of information, and is similarly signalled by the use of narrative ploys of dialogic undercutting and diminishing characteristics, even if the author is more forgiving. Hanlon's political aversion to Chatwin as a meddling neo-imperialist is rendered irrational by the brash tone and inelegant juxtaposing of his argument, and a general aura of crazed behaviour. Through the display of a naked, solitary old man with a withered hand living in squalor, Chatwin marginalizes the eclectic unionist, whose turns at reading Marx, accusing Chatwin of the dishonest work of a writer, regaling the British atomic tests and by association, the author's social and national pedigree, could otherwise threaten the authority of Chatwin's position (88-94). Tellingly, Hanlon backs down from his initial animosity, which reinforces the marginality of his positions, but while this may deflect the blame from the author, it also creates sympathy towards his political points by deflating his craziness to mere lonely eccentricity.

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[32] Although the policeman at the Popanji station is portrayed more sympathetically, he is a striking exception to this pattern. (149-52).

The mediation or control of reciprocity is apparent in the choice of narrative representations of these "anti-informants". By fixing on the personal subjectivity of the author's persona, building up suggestions of superior artistic taste and understanding (including the "affinity" with the nomadic subject constructed early on in the book),[33] and filtering information through the specific discourse of this mediation, such resistances can be assimilated into the text, deflecting the assertions to the author's advantage. The potential blockages such figures represent to the development of his story are prevented and consumed instead as narrative fodder for a heteroglossic discourse. The discourses of racism and imperialism, potentially distancing to his project, are assumed by Chatwin as part of his own identity and ethos in the production of a multiracial, post-imperial ethnography. The survival of negative trends in this production is skilfully attributed to "others": generally, white Australians who are portrayed as segregating or denying certain cultural knowledges. This can be seen when Toyne's (and indirectly Michael's and Mudrooroo's) concerns with those who meddle or appropriate Aboriginal discourse are (partially) assumed by Chatwin, by turning the focus of criticism back on those "advisors" who speak in the stead of Aborigines.

Although Chatwin provides few directly related accounts of conversations with Aboriginal subjects, when they do occur they display a richness of comprehension wholly at odds with a static representation as cultural subjects. When "Joshua" relates his experiences of a ethnomusicology experiment, wherein four representative "primitive" singers are tested for brain activity, and performs a "Qantas Dreaming" based on this trip to Amsterdam, the recognition of adapting culture to experience, and an inclusion of a critique of Western cultural practice (a context of shared humour

[33] Chatwin makes much of the "superior" artistic creativity of nomads, in terms of music, costume, pictorial art and poetry, so his self-personification as nomadic reflects this criterion of taste.

at the absurdity of such an experiment), function to display a measure of ethnographic reciprocity (172-4). Likewise, Chatwin's preconception about Aboriginal hunting methods is subverted, with a humorous bathos, by his discovery of the modern practice of running over 'roos, and with the "exploitation" of the author for money and the muscle required to free the stranded car (234-6). The slippage between expectations and experience displays the dynamism between cultural discourses, evidence of the background of polyphony that the text attempts to sample.

This dimension of polyphony is, however, thoroughly textualised. Against the narrative devices of "anti-informants", Chatwin ranges a series of intertextual sources that are valorised, and, by association, bolsters his own subjective authority. Aesthetic augmentations of particular cultural theories privilege their claim to a certain authority through the reported practice that they have been based on. These practices are a mixture of those reported at second hand and the apparent experiences of Chatwin himself. In this way, the author negotiates a use of informants in different fields and positions, including Strehlow, "Arkady"-Sawenko, "Father Flynn"-Pat Dodson, Lorenz, Brain and various versions of Chatwin himself. Despite the difference in the original sources Chatwin narrates these alike: through his interpretation of them and fashioning the fragments into some connected notion of what he purports as "the nomad experience" that functions as social critique.

At home, ranging.

Although, the production of a text on nomads ranges, dialogically, into the heteroglot domain of "nomadology", the significance of this practice and the resultant subjects must be examined against other, homeless subjects of writing. While the work of Deleuze and Guattari, particularly *Schizophrenia and Capitalism,* may seem

to provide a necessary context to the structure and stylistic concerns of *The Songlines,* the assumption of Chatwin's "Nomadic Alternative" relies heavily on a closeted approach that ignores some of the fuller implications of Deleuzian theory. As a work of "nomadic" practice, *The Songlines* is a valedictory but incomplete performance. Through his interpretation and fashioning, the performed fragments display what Chatwin purports as "a nomad experience" that functions as social critique. Yet, the final implications of that critique are left hanging.

For example, the end of the book does not offer any final resolution. In the last chapter, the metafictional presence of the author is observed again, watching himself watch elderly Aborigines on their deathbeds. The "wonderful" nature of the scene is multiple: a vision of contentment in the face of death, a knowledge of fitting into the ritual narrative of a songline's beginning and end at the same time, a portrayal of "man" in a natural state. All of these wonders, though, are further complicated by the elements of cultural exchange performed in the recording of the scene. Questions raised by this scene, which are not answered, include: whose death are we watching? Is there metempsychosis at work here, with transmissions of culture being practiced? What implications would such an exchange engender? And how does that connect with the "transmissions" of the book (including economic transactions of purchase)? Does the author have the authority to negotiate such exchanges? Who might?

Similarly, the ultimate act of a "nomadic" text must be to encourage a continuing performance by the ultimate "nomads": an active readership; yet, in this respect, *The Songlines* displays a construction of a state of homelessness that is at odds with that examined in the next chapter. Chatwin's travels seem as much a denial and apology of "historical taintedness" as a celebration of New Age freedoms and paradoxically privileged disenfranchisement. In contrast, turning to the example of Said, I argue

that his depiction is of those with something lost who seek to reverse the subtractions of travel.

THREE.

Addressing Unstated Sadness: Photographing Exile, Historicizing Diaspora.

> "Do you have any relatives here?" was the next question, to which I answered, "No one," and this triggered a sensation of such sadness and loss as I had not expected.
>
> (Said, Out *of Place* xii).

> But I am the exile.
>
> Seal me with your eyes.
>
> Take me wherever you are –
>
> Take me wherever you are.
>
> ---
>
> Shield me with your eyes.
>
> Take me as a relic from the mansion of sorrows.
>
> Take me as a verse from any tragedy;
>
> Take me as a toy, a brick from the house
>
> So that our children will remember to return.
>
> (Mahmoud Darwish qtd. in Said and Mohr 150).

> She'is all States, and all Princes, I. (John Donne).

In keeping with my ongoing movement between types of displacement and different contexts of engagement within a contemporary field of cultural production, I now travel to the contested imaginative domain of Palestine, examining the subjects

of exile and diaspora via a discussion of Edward W. Said. Whereas the previous chapter was centred around the figure of Bruce Chatwin, and "nomadic" travelling subjects which explicitly denigrated civilisation (especially Western) while implicitly remaining reliant on state structures and their trappings, this chapter's discussion of Said, and "Palestinian lives," reveals a different emphasis on "historically tainted" material and narrative relations while continuing to consider the importance of states and related histories. In contrast to my reading of Chatwin's construction of a valorised state of homelessness, I look to Said to provide an insight into those with something lost who seek to reverse the subtractions of travel. I argue that, while Said makes much of the creative uniqueness of a position of in-between-ness, and a significant energy and productive value is attached to this position, a large part of his critical creativity is devoted to mending the cultural rifts of displacement. His efforts to provide commentary on the increasing scale of those displaced demonstrates the shift from small scale émigré communities which requires a new scale of critical awareness: "our age – with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers – is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration" ("Reflections on Exile" 174).

In as much as this chapter represents a reinterpretation and deviation from conventional travel writing, by focussing on the representation of the histories that "taint" the experience of Palestinians, I seek to place the movements between subjects of exile and diaspora in contemporary literature, in a project that has parallels with the scholarly, critical and, arguably, "nationalist" project of Said himself. In this placement I seek to show how important the construction of diasporic subjectivity is in revealing key features of contemporary cultural negotiation.

Questions of Returning.

Mainstream travel writing often assumes the form of a "round trip". In these cases, the writing anticipates a return that is at least implicit, both in terms of the traveller coming home and the assumption of a home audience (Clark 17). This narrative anticipation is further reinforced by the practice of "writing up the log" at home, retrospectively.[34] The authority of home, in this tradition, is an ever-present template against which the witnessed travels can become a reflexive validation (or revalidation) of power. Conventional travel writing, in Pratt's analysis, has historically provided "a utopian, innocent vision of European global authority" (Pratt 39). Even where change is generated and acknowledged in this conventional, Western travel practice, and an "unsettlement" of vision that may challenge the stasis of "home" occurs, this difference is often contained in anecdotal parenthesis, "fabulated" *from home* into a resettlement and re-accommodation into a comfortable tone and view of the externalised exotic, This ensures a sense of continuity prevails (Musgrove 35). As Steve Clark puts it,

> travel writing is "[u]nlike the *Bildungsroman*, [in that] there is little detail of the early domestic setting: the performative utterance that opens the narrative is "I went". Structurally, this is A to B; but A is present only through implicit contrast with subsequent sojourns and destination. Something very strange has always already happened in every travel narrative: the decision to be there, rather than here, and yet still wish to be heard here." (17).

In contrast, the production and reception of literature in "exile" introduces complications in the imagination of authority and identity textualised in the course of travel. Said writes in *After the Last Sky* that

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[34] James Clifford discusses this practice, both within and without the discipline of Anthropology, citing the examples of Malinowski's writings, in the field and outside as a demonstration of the importance of

> Palestinian life is scattered, discontinuous, marked by the artificial and imposed arrangements of interrupted or confined space, by the dislocations and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time... where no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events are accidents, all progress is a digression, all residence is exile. We linger in nondescript places, neither here nor there. (20-1)

When the writer is not writing for or at "home", and in fact may never affect the yearned-for return of the exile, conception of space and subjectivity assumes a "doubled vision" (Said and Mohr 6). Consequently, translations of language and space, the political formation of imagined, virtual or palimpsest states, multiple nationality and affiliation are some of the features of this literature: features that formulate an anti- "anti-conquest" narrative (Pratt 39).

Although various sources will be synthesised in a study of theory and practice, I direct particular attention to the texts of Said that engage specifically and extensively with diasporic process: *After the Last Sky* and *Out of Place.* These works display a focussing of interests that continue in his recent critical involvement in the Palestine-Israel "peace process" (*Peace and Its Discontents*; *End of the Peace Process*). His opinion of the Palestinian "question" (particularly topical due to the breakdown of the "peace", which he suggests was at best a set of uneasy capitulations to the occupying power), maps a relationship between politics, art and the personal, a displacement that writes autobiographically of the particular exilic experience of a culture whilst also negotiating a vision of the homeland of the past and present (and possibly also the future).

The Diaspora that dare not speak its name.

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return as an authorising, objectifying practice in travel-texts. See "On Ethnographic Self-Fashioning," (*Predicament* 92-114).

Said's engagement with a diasporic narrative process requires an examination of the history of the term. Firstly, though, I should note the hostility of Said's personal engagement with the term *Diaspora*. The classical exemplar, *the* context that continues to shape the signification of the term, is that of the Jewish peoples' Diaspora (the common capitalisation of the term lends weight to its primacy). Use of the term by other peoples therefore lends itself to a connotative relationship with the dispersal of the Jews from their homeland, further dispersals from groupings in these secondary "homelands" (for example the expulsion of Jews from the Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella), and a template of victim hood and constructive resistance. Diaspora is a term that is connected with the founding of the modern state of Israel, and because of this strong connotation with Jewish, and particularly Zionist experience, Said is resistant to using the term as a self-description, intent on claiming difference. Said states in *After the Last Sky,* "I do not like to call it a Palestinian *diaspora:* there is only an apparent symmetry between our exile and theirs" (115). Certainly, the issues involved in dealing with a diaspora that seems to be caused by the end of another complicate comparisons. Nonetheless, there is a commonality of experience and imaginative production at work in the globalised understanding of the term, and increasing application of the term to divergent contexts. This, I contend, is enough cause for me to use this "historically tainted," conscious of its associations, in an informed act of catachresis.

A common contemporary definition of (lower case) diaspora emphasizes the combined patterns of dispersal and continuing cultural identification present in many examples of mass migration, in a way that indicates its usefulness in application to Palestinian contexts. As James Clifford indicates, diaspora is a transnational term that exemplifies "border" contexts: suggesting concurrent practices of travel and dwelling

("Diasporas" 303-4). Robin Cohen's account of its historical usage shows that, from its earliest history (as a Greek word translating to something like "to sow-over"), the term has connoted colonialist practices of trade, militarism and settlement (ix). This colonial aspect can be seen in the variety of diasporic "types" of impulses that have been observed in the modern patterns of transnational migration; Cohen, for instance, has identified varieties of "victim", "labour", "imperial", "trade" and "cultural" diaspora that litter the landscape of global culture (x). Many different ethnic groups are increasingly labelled (by themselves or others) as "diasporic": a use of this term to describe and group various patterns of migrant dispersal of people from their homelands (for instance, in the recognition of an "Irish diaspora", an "Indian diaspora", both of which share the activities of the same imperial overseer [8]).[35]

All the same, how can the contexts of Palestinians and Israelis meet in the term of diaspora? The chief features and subsequent positions of the two traditions bear comparison. The Diaspora of the Jews is the exemplar of an exilic community which shares a common origin, but is "scattered to the winds" by the dissolution or exclusion from this origin-state. Significant features of nation-ness prevail ensuring a sense of community, particularly the survival of a foundational shared language and "national" texts, beliefs or common practices encapsulated in this tongue (the rise of the synthetic, Zionist impulse towards a reintegration of cultures into one Culture based in the twentieth-century construction of a new Israel is the most extreme manifestation of this sense of "community", epitomised in microcosm by the rise of the kibbutzim within the nation-state). The prevalence of ghettoism, physical, cultural and mental (and imposed both from without and within), has contributed to the impulse of encapsulation and preservation of the idealised "authentic", shared original

[35] For some other contributions on diasporic theory which influence this paper's analysis, see also Ghosh, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture"; Chow; Gilroy, Kaplan; and Brah.

culture. However, even in the ghetto's over-accentuation of the "traditional" there is difference, with a radical "orthodoxy" often revisionist of cultural origins. Furthermore, Jewish culture becomes truly transcultural when consideration is made of the social and genealogical interchange between the locals and exiles (sites such as religious conversion and intermarriage), the dispersal of the one Culture into many subcultures, speaking different tongues, of different "race", performing different versions of the role "Jew". Diaspora represents an uncomfortable accommodation between these filiative and affiliative traits in the "peripheral" culture.

Furthermore, the Zionist "reclamation" of the homeland, effectively a movement that ends the common Jewish Diaspora, continues this unstable accommodation with the resulting "problems" that can be seen in the fractured political scene of modern Israel, where the supposed commonality of Jewish settlers is an unrealised myth, with divisions between the Arab Jews, Ashkenazim and Sephardim, the secular and the religious, the militantly separatist and the culturally inclusive. Further problems arise in the vision of Israel as a warranted reversal of the historical diasporic exile when this requires the destruction of the State of Palestine and a consequent diaspora of Palestinians.[36]

Context to Texts: Writerly Subjective Distance and Relationships.

The two Said works addressed here in detail arise out of personal and collective needs to re-establish history, past and present, in order to connect symbolically the dispersed "realities" of experience in the Palestinian diaspora. Said's own history of involvement in "diaspora" can be traced back to a personal sense of ahistoricism and disjunctive placement in a foreign terrain in his background. An important

[36] Cohen deals extensively with this "mythic" production of the Jewish Diaspora and consequent (problematic) claims to Israel in Chapters 1 and 6 of *Global Diasporas.*

signification of this is his early academic attention to "exiled" figures such as Conrad and Auerbach. In his critical consideration of Conrad, Said states that he

> had an extraordinarily persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality, he instinctively protected his vision with the aesthetic restraint of someone who stood forever at the very juncture of *this* [i.e. the colonial] world with another, always unspecified but different, one (JanMohamed 441-62).[37]

Exile, then, is a condition that allows a duality of consciousness, a "vision" that looks at least two ways. While this position can be turned into "positive missions that lead to significant cultural acts," as in the case of Auerbach (JanMohamed 443-4), the duality of the individual exile can also be emblematic of isolation and self-effacement. When Said writes of a Conrad who was "misled by language even as he led language into a dramatisation no other author really approached" (Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* 90), he develops a model of exilic duality whereby the figure of the author can simultaneously refer to his past "difference" and yet by *writing* it rather than speaking it, efface it or at least "mask" it.

Said's awareness of writerly effacement seems to reflect on a legacy in European subjective theory, developing towards his own particular engagement with political and colonial effacement. In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said quotes Walter Benjamin on the distinction between "story-teller" and "novelist", laying ground for a movement towards his vision of the scope of "Orientalism" representing cultural hegemony (*Orientalism* 7-9):

> [t]he storyteller takes what he tells from experience - his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is

[37] Quoting Said "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi,* 70-1 (Summer 1986): 49.

> himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others. To write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to the extremes in the representation of human life. (Benjamin qtd. in Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* 100).

Hence, he describes a kind of imposed exile from the subject of writing as a distancing affect for those writing novels: a performative action that Said elsewhere connects with the "consolidated vision" of empire (*Culture and Imperialism* 73-4).

In a slightly different way, Said engages with the "effacement," or deferral of subjective identity in *écriture*, suggested in the theory of Roland Barthes (Said "Amateur of the Insoluble" 29). The intensity of the writing process, in Barthes' understanding, renders the subjects written about impenetrable. In particular, Barthes' subjective "death" of the author has some parallels with Said's view of cultural effacement in terms of linguistic exile. When he connects the use of ink in writing with its role as the masking agent of the squid, Barthes stresses that the "coincidence" of writing with the subject written about (and the concurrence of at least two narrative "versions"), affects a kind of implosion or abolition of referentiality (Eakin 4-23).[38] Thus, relying constantly on a translation and transculturation of history, Said also recognises the potential obscuring of his subjects of writing, just like, when focussing on the restrictive choice of genre and written English, Said constructs a version of the artistic Conrad who "had the dubious privilege of witnessing within his own double life the change from storytelling as useful, communal art to novel writing as essentialized, solitary art." (*World* 101).

The inclusion of James Clifford into the theoretical framework further extends this reading, adding an inquiry into exilic "fixity." In Clifford's opinion, "Conrad's extraordinary experience of travel, of cosmopolitan ness, finds expression only when

it is limited, tied down to a language, a place, an audience" (*Routes* 43). Said, moving from his criticism of the singularity of Conrad into his own praxis, deals with the problem of "fixity" as an exilic individual by investing himself with an identity by association with multiple, diasporic subjects. The question he must pose himself is how to avoid becoming an irrevocably lone voice, in the face of institutional placement as an exilic singularity.

Desiring Accompaniment, Collecting Histories.

In *After the Last Sky,* Said displays a desire to bridge the gap of language, to translate his own experience of exile into the community of a diasporic narrative. As he states in "Reflections on Exile":

> exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. They generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them. Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology – designed to reassemble as exile's broken history into a new whole – is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible in today's world. Look at the fate of the Jews, the Palestinians, and the Armenians. (*Exile* 177)

The "urgent need" of reconstitution may be doomed, by his own admission, to fall into a nationalist narrative, yet the desire remains to impel Said towards reconstructing a history in which he can resume a place. Certainly, by subtitling this work *Palestinian Lives*, Said emphasizes a desire to reconstitute a people, and present a kind of dialogue with fellow Palestinians in encounters that are often limited to

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[38] Quoting and paraphrasing Barthes: "Coincidence," in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes.* Eakin, however, notes in the confluence of "squidlike concealment and display" a.persistence of refentiality, even if multiply signified, in various "nominations" or "signatures" in the text. 23.

imaginary and imagistic levels by exile. While these given a plural rendition (*Lives* rather than "life"), Said works hard to reverse the negative aspects of scattered exile, imposed aphasia, and loss of citizenry and communal identity, an endeavour that reveals his political intention to voice concerns at the neglected "Question of Palestine".

In the "Introduction", Said states that there is "a huge body of literature [about Palestinians]... most of it polemical, accusatory, denunciatory... [with the result that] for all the writing about them, Palestinians remain virtually unknown" (4). His writing is presented as the activity of redressing the act of *speaking for* or *over* Palestine's dispossessed, a project that reflects the concerns of two earlier texts, in particular: *Orientalism* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981).[39] As in these books, Said takes a position speaking as one of these people who occupy an awkward, and often ghosted-out position in international politics, and whose "fall[ing] between a number of classifications... contributes to the problem of writing about and representing the Palestinians generally" (6). Said challenges the "outside" view of Palestinians as a distortion of marginal elements of his culture divorced from its infrastructure (of historical conditions, political and religious discreetness) for jingoistic purposes(4). The "virtual" Palestinians he perceives in the media are "ahistorical" and faceless, useful as terrorist ghouls to justify military spending and imperialist policies or as fabulous martyrs to illustrate the fragile facade of pan-Arab nationalism. Said's recognition or re-imagining of a "real" people with a diversity of social roles and identities stresses the intention of (re)constituting a "culture" beyond such typing: "the whole point of this book is to engage in this difficulty, to deny the habitually

[39] In these books, "coverage" signifies the Western media or "expert" portrayals of a generalised Orientalist stereotype and more "specifically" a "gross simplification of 'Islam." Numerous manipulative aims are realised, from the stirring up of a new cold war, to the instigation of racial

simple, even harmful representations of Palestinians, and to replace them with something more capable of capturing the complex reality of their experience" (6). The overtracing of lines of narrative connection and communal identification threaten the re-emergence of a prior (and continuing) map through the surface and from beyond the "ghosted" boundaries of the palimpsest Israel. Representing Israel as a palimpsest allows Said to engage with the various mappings of culture and the multiple narrative devices writing over and on material that is not totally obscured by the process.

Stare Wars.

The collaborative nature of *After the Last Sky,* indicated in its inclusion of the photographs of Jean Mohr and (in those photos) a multiplicity of Palestinian subjects, provides Said with a space for dealing with Palestinian diaspora that can occupy many different subject positions and display a complex intersection of gazes (Lutz and Collins). From the outset, Said's words are presented as necessary to frame, comment and elucidate the "muted" photography of Jean Mohr: to create an "empathy" with Palestinians and provide "a dialogue with the excluded" (Nicos Papastergiadis qtd. in Osbourne 138). Mohr's photographs exist, by themselves, as an *ur*-text to *After the Last Sky.* Originally commissioned for display at a United Nations Conference on the "Question of Palestine", there was an attempt (by various parties) to limit the photos' impact through the limitation of captions to a bare naming of place (3).

However, this restrictive, outsider "coverage" is resisted in Said's text. This resistance is achieved through the selection process of the photo taking and the apparent material positions of the subjects themselves. These pictures defy what

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antipathy, to mobilization for a possible invasion, to the continued denigration of Muslims and Arabs" (*Covering Islam* xviii).

Barthes terms the "spectrum": the ghostly associative aura of the images. Instead they represent the effect of a "punctum": reflecting something defiant, a referentiality that pierces the image, and complicates the "unary" Photograph (*Camera Lucida* 40-1). Whereas spectrum, for Barthes, entails "a relation to the 'spectacle' and... the return of the dead" (*Camera Lucida* 9), punctum is observable as a "co-presence" that shifts the significance of the image in the beholder's eyes, often by means of a jarring detail (*Camera Lucida* 42). Punctum is a medium for offering additional meaning from a subject, but also, for Barthes, the reader, it can be a point in which to insert personal association:

> There is a photograph by Kertész (1921) which shows a blind gypsy violinist being led by a boy; now what I see, by means of this "thinking eye" which makes me add something to the photograph, is the dirt road; its texture gives me the certainty of being in Central Europe; I perceive the referent (here the photograph really transcends itself: is this not the sole proof of its art? To annihilate itself as *medium,* to be no longer a sign but the thing itself?), I recognize, with my whole body, the straggling villages I passed through on my long-ago travels in Hungary and Rumania. (*Camera Lucida* 45).

Punctum, in short, represents more than the spectral vision of a moment from history returning to the gaze, it extends an association and movement *into* the picture, albeit mediated through memory, in both Barthes and Said's cases. Said's awareness of punctum is presented as the recognition of intimacy with certain images, details that speak directly to Said, the Palestinian. Hence what Said perceives in the photographic "capture" of Palestinian peasants (Said and Mohr 93):

> any awareness of the past, of historical change, of one's own way of seeing, must affect the way one reads the pictures of peasant. Now the faces you see looking out on the world exude not so much the resignation of passively endured oppression as the reverse of something withheld from an immediate deciphering. This man lives in the enormous

> Amman refugee camp of Baqa'a. The things you can be sure of have to do with what he can do – he's a worker, a peasant – and where he comes from (his village, his family, his past and present movements). But he does not simply express the poignant, mute and enduring sadness of an archetypal peasant people, without politics, or historical detail or development: the reserve of a force building up out of a long, intense history, frustrated and angry about the present, desperately worried about the future. (91).

In a very useful way, Said accepts punctum as the means to cross the class barrier (which is as much a distance *socially* as spatially) in order to place this face in his (Said's) historical context. I argue that his worrying about the "placelessness" of the peasant women on the next two pages also demonstrates Said's involvement with punctum, in this case speaking of the dangers of silent subjects who "invite the embroidery of explanatory words (92). Of course, this is actually what Said himself is engaged in doing: he replaces some of the stereotypical possibilities for captioning ("'Shepherds in the field… tending their flocks, much as the Bible says they did'" [92]) with an allusion that transcends mythic or clichéd gender stigma, perceiving a Palestinian inflection on Marx's alienation of labour (93).

Said's politically directed gaze then, has the power to at least recognise the carceral situations of his subjects. However, how are these subjects to assume their own power? Theorising further, I suggest that when the "ghostly" image, the "little simulacrum" (Lutz and Collins 363-84), stares defiantly back, the carceral construction, where the observer controls the object of his or her gaze, must be disturbed, the orderly perspective of observer and observed shifted. This shift is part of a process that Bhabha explains as a feature of colonial mimicry.

Bhabha's rendition of the power relationship between a colonising gaze and the object gazed upon stresses the returned "displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" (86). As an illustration of this, in one of Mohr's images, the subjects of the image are

shot taking their own photo of the photographer (167). Although their photograph is not reproduced, such an image immediately disrupts the common assumption of one-way objectification. Earlier in the book, another image produces a similarly striking effect. Mohr has captured something in the stance of a Palestinian boy, close-cropped, scarred, wearing a "disco" movie t-shirt, with one hand on hip and a direct look out of the frame, which must intersect or "speak" to the viewer's gaze, and effect a disturbance to the functioning of roles of observer and observed (24). The photo of the boy affects a slippage against the articulation of object in the stereotyping scopic drive, providing what Bhabha conceives of as a space to challenge the "fixity" of discursive relations:

> in the objectification of the scopic drive there is always the threatened return of the look; in the identification of the Imaginary relation there is always the alienating other (or mirror) which crucially returns its image to the subject; and in that form of substitution and fixation that is fetishism there is always the trace of loss, absence... the recognition and disavowal of 'difference' is always disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction. (81)

Bhabha's subject of colonial discourse is empowered by the ambivalence inherent in the "conflictual desires" of that discourse which cannot decide whether to treat colonial subjects as abject absence or fantastic reflection. Bhabha argues that the agency of the native to look back further complicates its role in a process of fetishistic objectification:

> this process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed, and "partial" representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from existence. (89).

However, without captioning and a larger contextual embedding, the apparent defiance of address is not clearly defined. Visually, the power of the image must

force an interruption, but the resulting gap needs to be significantly addressed. The combination of the image with the caption "*Gaza, 1979. Refugee camp. A boy of unknown age",* allows Said to address the "tenor" of the message: using the specific boy and his defiance in the face of (real and photographic) incarceration to perform the roles of Palestinian child with "an out-of-season maturity in one part of the body or mind while the rest remains childlike" and "feared... hence to be deported - or constitute[d as] special targets for death" because of a perception of the potential for terrorism. It follows that the photo interacts with the text to rehearse several differing positions, defiance and innocence, terrorism and the absurdity of such identification with a child who may just like John Travolta; but even here, the aspect of cross-cultural taste is never so innocent. Travolta, his "look", and the celebrity-role he represents, of a 70s pop-cultural style of rebellion, provide an accessible identity for such Palestinians to "inhabit," a particular punctum of cultural affiliation. Hence, a number of political points are readily available from analysis of any one of Mohr's photographs.

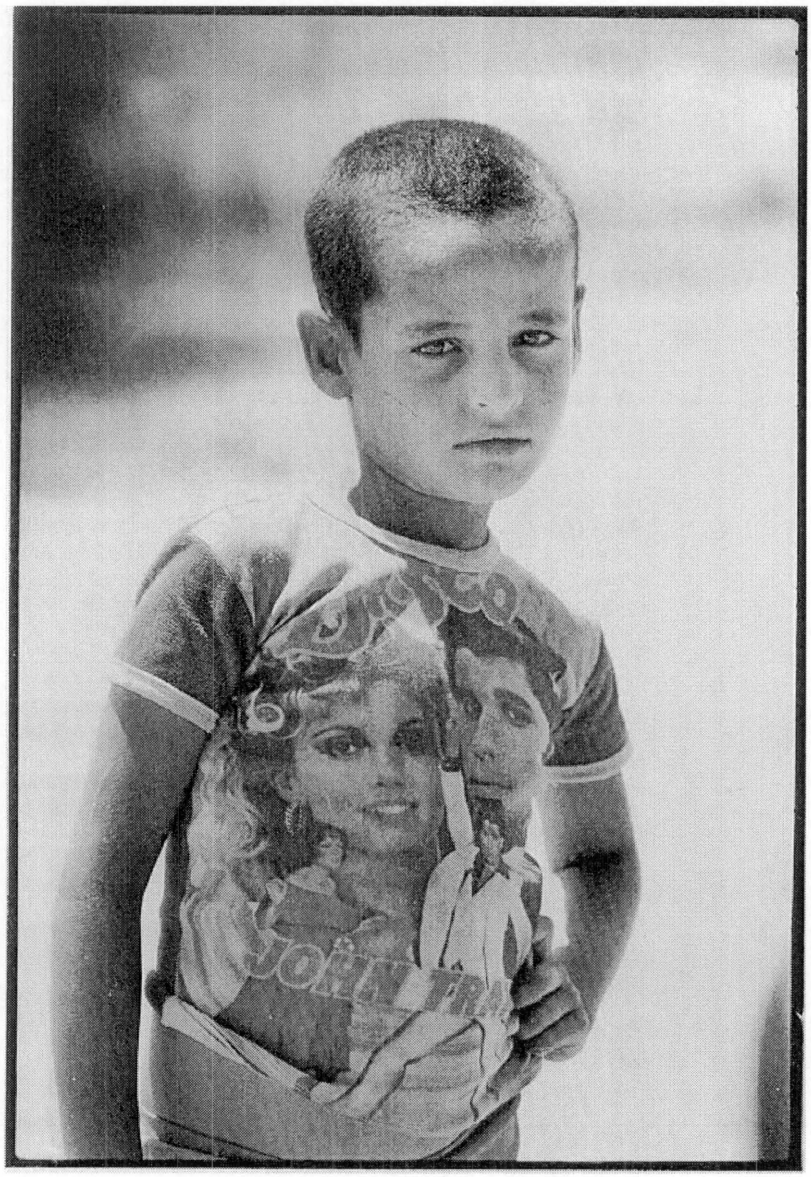

Fig. 1. "*Gaza, 1979.*" (Said and Mohr 24).

Further Politics of Representation.

Said's textualising of Mohr's photographs adds a further political signification to the image: "politicising art", in Walter Benjamin's words (235). When Said looks at the "coverage" of Palestinians, both what is said about them, and the presence related in the photographs, text and image converge in ways that emphasise multiple orders of signification. Said contemplates the "rich[ness] of our mutability" and instability:

> [w]ho are the Palestinians? 'The inhabitants of Judea and Samaria.' Non-Jews. Terrorists. Troublemakers. DPs. Refugees. Names on a card. Numbers on a list.

> Praised in speeches… but treated as interruptions, intermittent presences. Gone from Jordan in 1970, now from Lebanon. None of these departures and arrivals is clean, definitive. Some of us leave, others stay behind. Remnants, new arrivals, old residents. (26)

On the opposite page the image of a scarecrow is presented, a motley collection of rags and old boot standing over a vegetable patch and backed by strands of barbed wire and seemingly desolate land stretching out of focus. Underneath the photo, the caption reads "*Bersheeba, 1979. Near a Bedouin encampment, a little kitchen garden - and its scarecrow of bits and pieces*" (27). Multiple inscriptions, a figurative palimpsest of inscription and over-inscription, can be deduced from this relationship of texts to image.

Fig. 2. *"Bersheeba, 1979."* (Said and Mohr 27).

Following Barthes' model of multiple signification, Said and Mohr build meanings that slip over and around the "obvious" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 111-27). An initial reading of this picture may note the domestication of barren land, with the

fence line shutting-out the remaining desert and the construction of a guardian scarecrow over the enclosed garden. The connotation of this visual message may thus appear positive: a plot of productive land tended against encroaching desert. In this reading, the image "speaks" intertextually to the past, evincing a continuity with the images in Walid Khalidi's *Before Their Diaspora* that illustrate the claim that "it was Palestinians who made the desert bloom" on a large scale, and *prior* to the project of the kibbutzim (Khalidi 125). The placement of the word "*Bedouin*" may seem to reinforce this connection, the connotation of a traditional nomadic desert-dweller authorising this semantic location. However, this is only "***[n]ear** a Bedouin encampment*", with the presence of the barbed wire raising the question: why would a traditional desert-dweller want to keep the desert out?

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of this image fabrication of "bits and pieces" with the "remnants" of the opposite page, creates a resonance that effects another level of signification to the image. The scarecrow begins to represent a different history, speaking of the status of the Palestinian refugee, with the instability of place reinforced by the captioned "encampment" and the barbed wire containment. The significance of the sole of the boot representing the scarecrow's face can be read as a violent displacement, a suggestion of dispossession and enforced movement, especially emphatic if the interpretation is of a cast-off *army* boot. The strength of this figurative effacement, the blank visage of boot, combined with the narrative depiction of refugee status, both interrupts and mixes with the signification of the "blooming desert" creating a hybrid imagistic effect that arrests attention, in a manner that (again) functions with some similarity to the stare of the defiant child.

***Becoming* Palestinian.**

Said develops this effect into a further examination of emblematic "codes" of Palestinian-ness. Against the ripe image of the refugee camp, he poses two more: that of "the identity card... which is never Palestinian but always something else", and emblematic fictional creation (by Emile Habiby) of the "Pessoptimist."[40] This figure, according to Said, is the exemplar of the Palestinian condition:

> the Pessoptimist (*al-mustasha'il*), the protagonist of a disorderly and ingenious work of Kafkaesque fiction, which has become a kind of national epic.... is being half here, half not here, part historical creature, part mythological invention, hopeful and hopeless, everyone's favourite obsession and scapegoat. Is Habiby's character fiction, or does his extravagant fantasy only begin to approximate the real? Is he a made-up figure or the true essence of our existence? Is Habiby's jamming-together of words – *mutafa'il* and *mustasha'im* into *mustasha'il*, which repeats the Palestinian habit of combining opposites like *la* ('no') and *na'am* ('yes') into *la'am* – a way of obliterating distinctions that do not apply to us, yet must be integrated into our lives? (26)

Fig. 3. "*Ramallah, 1984.*" (Said and Mohr 128).

[40] Said introduces Emile Habiby as a "craggy, uncompromisingly complex, and fearsomely ironic man from Haifa, son of a Christian family, Communist party stalwart, longtime Knesset member, jounalist, editor.... [His novel] is the best work of Palestinian writing yet produced, precisely because the most seemingly disorganized and ironic." 26.

Said's point here, that images of Palestinians refuse to be categorised with any stability, is proved throughout the rest of this section, where photographic images refuse to be pinned down as the passive, the observed.

A particularly striking example of this is the image that captures two subjects and an enigmatic moment in history. The caption gives the setting as Ramallah, in the immediate aftermath of the 1968 War, and also names the two "characters" portrayed: a "thoughtful" Israeli soldier, and a villager (42). However, the political situation of the moment (Israeli victory, Palestinian defeat) is undermined by the poses of the participants, their physical features, the angle of gazes and the *perspective* constructed by the photographer-observer. The Israeli soldier may be simply "thoughtful", yet his whole posture as he sits in the dark interior, with downcast eyes, hand bearing and covering mouth and jaw, the texture of his face similarly sagging and drawn, suggests fatigue and (possibly) dismay. In contrast, the Arab "villager" looks in from a window above the head of the Israeli, brightly backlit, with open hand pressed against the pane, and a direct, open stare into Mohr's lens. The contrast between the "historical" situation and the photographed one suggests a kind of "counter-authority", or a directed resistance to the position of dominance after a military action. The presence of the photographer obviously guides this view, figuratively confusing the roles of victor and defeated, and allowing Said to intervene with an offer to see Israelis "sharing a common space with *us*, in Palestine" (43, emphasis added).

Fig. 4. *"Kalandia (near Ramallah), 1967."* (Said and Mohr 42).

The position that Said forms around the inclusive "*us*" is one that indicates a certain flexibility or movement. As Said states in his introduction, the status of Palestinian "realities" is not "objective" but rather multiply subjective:

> [o]ur intention was to show Palestinians through Palestinian eyes without minimising the extent to which even to themselves they feel different, or 'other'. Many Palestinian friends who saw Jean Mohr's pictures thought that he saw us as no one else has. But we also felt that he saw us as we would have seen ourselves - at once inside and outside our world. The same double vision informs my text. As I wrote, I found myself switching pronouns, from 'we' to 'you' to 'they', to designate Palestinians. As abrupt as these shifts are, I feel they reproduce the way 'we' experience ourselves, the way 'you' sense

> that others look at you, the way, in your solitude, you feel the distance between where 'you' are and where 'they' are. (6)

The blankness of the boot looking out of the picture of the scarecrow can be matched by the voiceless gaze of many Palestinian subjects photographed amongst the dispersed ruins of their culture, a gaze given voice by Said's text and translated from the objective "they" to the exilic "we" to the subjectively viewing "you". The shifting and doubling of the intersecting gazes involved in the production, interpretation, reproduction, transmission, and reception allows Said tactically to assume several positions, playing with the element of distance variably in order to self-fashion, mediate and receive the status of "exile".

Declarations of the Exile: (re)Stated Presence.

The processes of this tactical "placement" of subjectivity within the text are quite complex. However, with the help of Hamid Naficy's work on Iranian exile TV in Los Angeles, this aspect of the coding of the exile into Said's narrative framing of Mohr's photographs can be further elucidated. *After the Last Sky* fits Naficy's observation of the structure of exilic discourse: "nesting" various, specific, and sometimes contradictory, experiences of exile within the "supertext" of Palestinian diaspora, which is, in turn imbedded in the "megatext" of Western literary production and reception (Naficy 540-1). Said simultaneously draws attention in his text to the various "states" of Palestinians, from the "meagre, anonymous space outside a drab Arab city, outside a refugee camp, outside the crushing time of one disaster after another" (Said and Mohr 11), to a celebration of a statistically high level of "'success' - de-centred, esoteric, and elusive as it may be" (115). This process, a movement through various "nestings", also describes a movement from the "inside" of the

images, through the mediation of language to its intended audience, a shifting of codes that, to an extent, mimics Naficy's duality of "scopophilia" and "epistephilia": fetish objectification of images and words, respectively.

According to Naficy's notion of "exilic flow", the fetishisation of images and words are both a means of connection with the culture left behind and, increasingly, a means of creating new connections with the host culture (539). In terms of representing a continuing Iranian subjectivity, even when it is situated within the Western megatext of television production, Naficy cites the importance of maintaining "viewers' rules of social interaction" (550). This means that images of Iranian life are often maintained in the background of social meetings, augmented by the other paraphernalia and detritus of an exilic dwelling place taken in at a "glance": "souvenirs, photographs, flags, maps, carpets, paintings, food, aromas, art objects and handicrafts from the homeland" (550). A similar "glance" through Mohr's photo essay grouped together as "Interiors" (50-85) reveals just this kind of exilic exhibition, an almost-religious metonymic reference to material past. Another example that Naficy suggests demonstrates the continuing presence of the mother country, within the visual domain, is that of "cinematic techniques of spectator positioning, [they] are not universal and can be culturally coded and read"; thus

> If rule of the Iranian system of courtesy (called *ta'arof*) are applied, for example, an over-the-shoulder shot in television can be read as an impolite gesture, because one character has his back to the viewers. Turning one's back to someone, especially a stranger, is considered very impolite in the discourse of ritual courtesy. [In a]n example of this type,[... a] host was taped from over his shoulder or from three-quarter angle, with the result that his back was to the audience for much of the time. [A]t the end of the programme the host faced the audience and apologised for having turned his back to them. (550)

Naficy notes that the magazine format even more importantly contains the desire for words and information, and the televisual medium allows a directness of address that feeds the intensity of the desire (551).

Naficy has also noted changes over time in the production of this "exilic" medium, suggesting some incorporation into the dominant mode of discourse, yet he also perceives this process as syncretic rather than an overwhelming assimilation (563). Hence ritual, specific, and "insider" knowledge are expressed through the selection and framing of certain culturally iconic images and systems of narrative address, but increasingly against an awareness of distance to that culture, and an adaptation to new, hybrid forms that mix elements of filiation and affiliation.

While dealing with a quite different and much more socially heterogeneous group than Naficy's largely Westernised, bourgeois Iranians, Said's own tactics of address for his Palestinian subjects reveal points of comparison. The implicit claims of the images in *After the Last Sky* are multiple, immediate, "real", and "authentic", but their meanings and contexts (to *outsiders)* need the explanatory language of Said's text. The various intersecting gazes embodied in and brought to bear on the photographs are subject to these explanations. Language, and more importantly language from an authentic exile such as Said himself, is required in order to save these images from impotence:

> [e]xile is a series of portraits without names, without contexts. Images that are largely unexplained, nameless, mute. I look at them without precise anecdotal knowledge, but their realistic exactness nevertheless makes a deeper impression than mere information. I cannot reach the actual people who were photographed, except through a European photographer who saw them for me. And I imagine that he, in turn, spoke to them through an interpreter.[...] the embarrassment of people uncertain why they were being looked at and recorded. Powerless to stop it. (12-4)

This passage reveals Said's own scopophilia and epistephilia: searching for "exact" references to Palestinian existence, and "imagining" the words spoken in contexts otherwise denied him. In this way, his utterance is a filling in of blanks or an act of ventriloquism to jump the gaps of speech and physical distance that both emphasises and undermines the exilic authority of the speaker by the feature of separation and multiplying numbers of the various intermediaries. How many imperfect "translations" has the story that goes with the image gone through before it is related on the page? What is hidden by the remaining story in this process? Said's narration often resembles direct speech, but this is a narrative that is, by nature, indirect, relying on imperfect memories and fast movement between the subjects presented.

Although Said himself highlights the shifting nature of his own position, placing himself alternately inside and outside of the frame, he has much at stake, personally, in the fetishizing of these images, as "concrete" referents to the homeland that he is exiled from, and their subsequent translation into identifying narrative. These images are turned into statements that express the desire to re-state himself: by explaining these photographs Said can effect a symbolic return ("*awdah*") to his homeland through *imagination*, working from image to language by his use of an attested interior, coded language and his position as an insider ("*al-dakhil*") (51-2) (and in spite of his *other* position as a privileged outsider).

Engendered Visions.

This relationship between image and narrative, where a photograph becomes an aide-memoir, a passage into an interiorised Palestinian experiential fund of communal and private memory, not only induces a collective nostalgia for Palestine lost but also captures the immediacy of Palestinians' present situation of indeterminacy. For Said,

gender plays a pivotal role in this indeterminacy. For instance, a passage of several photographs with Palestinian women as subjects spurs Said into a generalised ode to women's roles that then intensifies with the addition of a personal story of loss which, in turn, reflects back on the theme of dispossession:

> Unless we are able to perceive at the interior of our life the statements women make – concrete, watchful, compassionate, immensely poignant, strangely invulnerable – we will never fully understand our experience of dispossession.[...] When my mother speaks of her early life in Nazareth – her immensely strict father's special gentleness with her, her closeness to her mother and her subsequent alienation from her, the (to me) rural authenticity of their life there, an authenticity with which I have had no contact – I have always sensed in her an apprehension of the regretted and unbridgeable gap separating her from that life. Not that she was driven from Nazareth in 1948 – she wasn't. She left with my father in 1932. But she tells this story. Immediately after she and my father were married at the mandatory government's registry office, a British official ripped up her passport. "You will now travel on your husband's passport," he said. To her remonstrations and queries he replied, in effect, "this negation of your separate identity will enable us to provide a legal place for one more Jewish immigrant from Europe. (77-8)

Despite his (partial) resistance to the urge to generalise from his mother's story, feeling that it is "too symbolic, and too definitive perhaps a tale of woman's disenfranchisement in a colonial situation" (78), the shame of becoming disenfranchised, a "mediated and perhaps subsidiary person, the wife and mother" are transmitted impressions that "taint" Said's current "hyper-travel," influencing how he reads Mohr's photography in a motile way even when apparently referring to the stasis of history. The position of women here seems very important, "nested" as they are into an extreme dispossession within the dispossessed: "There is an urgent need to

take stock with equal precision of the woman's negation and the Palestinian's dispossession, both of which help to constitute our present situation" (78). Said presents the journey into the domestic, feminine habitat, into the fullest interior of "'internal exile'" (80), as one that he also finds difficult. He desires connection with this aspect of Palestinian identity but, "because I am separated from those experiences by time, by gender, by distance – they are, after all, experiences of an interior I cannot inhabit – I am reconfirmed in my outsider's role" (83-4). By comparison, Said marks his reaction of the militant male insider-exiled by expression of an awareness, historically, with the need for blatant assertion. When he presents the "cult of physical strength... obviously the response of the weak to the strong... but... also an eye-catching, almost decorative pattern woven through ordinary experience," Said emphasizes its flashy difference but also strategic correlation to that of women subjects. Even in the masculine exteriority of Palestinian culture, Said stresses, the traits of exile create an irrepressible patterning that defies surface analysis.

Woven Together.

Throughout this kind of narrative travel, through time and space, class and gender, Said features the contingent details of exile and convoluted experience that authenticate his subject of exile. The agency of photography to speak to the various refugee realities and existences of Palestinians acts as a diasporic device of community, a shared language, a cultural code of signification through which Said is able to contend an interconnected worldliness through dispossession.

In just such a convolutedly positive way, the collection and effective juxtaposition of photographs in "States" (11-50), from a number of different sites of Palestinian dwelling and over a period of time, blends connections of both filiation (shared

origins) with contemporary affiliations of conditions, in a way that historicizes a kind of unity in diversity. Thus scenes that a Swiss photographer captured over a period between the seventies and mid-eighties as disparate spatially as the exiled communities and refugee camps of Tripoli, Jordan, and Lebanon, and from the occupied "interior" of Gaza, Galilee, Jerusalem, and the West Bank, represent a mapping of continuity through, and in spite of, the discontinuity of intervening state borders. The material presence of these contexts, as mediated by Mohr, is nonetheless Said's chance to effectively get "inside" a multi-faceted image of Palestine. The image-narrative dialogue functions as a device creating a shared diasporic identity of "Palestinian-ness", highlighting both the unity of the past and the survival of that recognition of shared experience and memories juxtaposed in the political and situational fragmentation of dispersal or the "present absentees" still abiding in the ghost of the homeland (11).

State and Pain: Enforced Deterritorialisation.

However, diaspora also embodies a divorced collective experience in the exterior ("*fil-kharij*"), with features of exile ("*manfa*") and estrangement ("*ghurba*") that allows Said to assume a subject position that is able to look at the international conditions of Palestinians from the perspective of an internationalist (51). The Palestinian "Question", Said argues, has a particular international currency, with much political point-scoring occurring between Israel, the Arab States and the West (especially the United States) that ignores the need to actually address the practicalities of Palestinian lives. From the perspective of the Israeli State, Said presents a view of Palestinians as, at best, non-entities: a second-class citizenry assimilated as Arab-Israelis or simply contained, ruled over, and encroached on, as in

the Occupied Territories, a pool of cheap labour, "ghosts" refused ownership of a history and a land.

At worst, though, Said considers the demonisation of Palestinians as "terrorists" to be a state-sanctioned trope, and one that "travels", internationally. This is an attitude that has historical, political and religious resonance, reflecting a cultural "*interconnection*" between legitimacy and those who *belong*, symbolically, on the inside of a religiously mandated, yet "secularly" realised, Israeli State: a state based on a diasporic connection of mythical homeland and Zionist settler wish-fulfilment. Said quotes from a document dealing with settlement policy to support a view of the "explicitly sectarian" Israeli State:

> The criteria established to determine priorities of settlement regions are "*interconnection* [*havirah*] between existing Jewish areas for the creation of [Jewish] settlement continuity" and "*separation* [*hayitz*] to restrict uncontrolled Arab settlement and the prevention of Arab settlement blocs"; "*scarcity* [*hersch*] refers to areas devoid of Jewish settlement." In these criteria "pure planning and political planning elements are included."
>
> *The West Bank Data Project: A Survey of Israeli Policies (*qtd. 20).

This model is one that is reliant on the exclusion as illegitimate "outsiders" of many who live within its borders. Many of these non-citizens inhabit the places where their families have lived for generations, yet they are dispossessed, redefined, and delineated by the superimposition of the expanding, unlimited map of Israel and its active policy of "*separation*" (20).

This figurative "othering" and creation of an "outsider" status from the inside of the modern state is a political deterritorialisation that Said resists even as he acknowledges that the strategy is effective in the power of its alienation (40-1). In a striking irony, Said draws attention to the comparative plight of Palestinians recreated

as aliens by relative foreigners when, regardless of nominal nationality, the label of Jewish identity seems to exert a kind of *ur*nationalism harnessed and legitimated by the Zionist state: a concept of Israel as an international *birth-right* that excludes the majority of its population. As proof, Said relates a speech of the Israeli Chief of Staff in 1979, General Eytan, rewriting the position of Palestinians as aggressive outsiders: "[i]n my opinion, the Arabs today are engaged in a process of conquest of the land, conquest of work, illegal immigration, terror there [in Galilee]" (110). Following this line, Palestinians are effectively revisioned, and as "illegal" aliens and agents of "terror" they are then "reasonably" deprived of rights.

It is this image of Palestinians that has strongest international currency: one that circulates despite a number of United Nations resolutions that question the legality of Israel's existence and treatment of Palestinians. Said attributes this widespread travelling of this image to the powerful support gifted by Israel's major ally, the United States (160). He projects the connection between America and Zionism as a multiple one, capitalist, political, and mythic, where the State of Israel "occupies a privileged place" in the mentality of Americans (133). The official American stance on Palestine, as Israel's "nemesis", has been particularly to emphasize the militant and religious elements of Palestinian resistance to the Occupying forces of Israel (in the State of Israel, the Occupied Territories of Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon etc.). The "American" media does this by constructing a stereotype of the "terrorist": anathema to its idealised principles of truth, justice and democracy (160). Said states that this position ignores any truth to the Palestinian claims to sovereignty and political autonomy, playing down the Israeli military machine as an agent of response to an Arab threat rather than as a tool of colonialist expansion and oppression. Due to the particularly commercially-interested system of the American political apparatus,

this support is translated into billions of dollars of military aid to Israel, at a time when America is supposedly brokering a lasting peace and a foreign policy that exhorts Palestinians to stop inciting the "reasonable" response of aimed bullets and rocket attacks on civilian by throwing stones and chanting slogans. In America, the power of the Zionist lobby, expressed in votes and financial backing, routinely sways Congress' stance on the Israel-Palestine situation, often simplifying the reactions of American citizens. Said explains that

> The influential English cultural critic Raymond Williams once said that no social system, no matter how repressive, can exhaust every social alternative that might contradict or resist it. The same is true of the United States where, despite the power of the Israeli lobby and the converging interests of that lobby with the strategic aims of the United States as characterized by the corporate and defence communities, there is an important sector of the population that is perplexed and angry that Israel should be getting away with so many infractions of what are stated U.S. policies, policies about human rights abuses, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal annexation of territory, and so on.... [However, having] address[ed] only the "policy makers" and "senior officials" and [left] the rest of the population unattended to...[, n]inety percent of the Western electorate still does not know that there is a Law of Return only for Jews, that Israel was built on the ruins of Palestinian society, and that only Jews (at the expense of the indigenous inhabitants) can benefit from the institutions of the state, Especially so far as landowning is concerned. (*End* 246-7).

In effect, as Said demonstrates, the focus on the Palestinian as "terrorist", where even the national dress of Palestine is undermined as "terrorist chic" (Said and Mohr 72-4), is an exercise in shifting attention away from the acquisitive process of cultural imperialism.

Unsettled Interiors.

Alongside Israel's status as a state with no officially fixed external borders, Said suggests that the nation treats its occupied "interior" as a colonial site of settlement and appropriation. In response, Said and Mohr stage an unsettling manoeuvre, alienating what are depicted as intrusions. A series of photographs in "Interiors" depicts views between settler and Arab communities (72-4). Two features of the series dominate. Firstly, the dynamism of the series, with a movement from foreground detail of the Israeli structures, to a view with the Arab settlement revealed in the near background over a barbed-wire wall, to a panorama of the Arab town itself, serves to establish a sense of spatial encroachment: the Israeli settlement is positioned overlooking, almost on top, of the Arab town. Secondly, this sense of encroachment is reinforced by the detail of the architecture framed. The proximity of the camera to the Israeli structures plays up the intensely angular forms of the settlement. The general fortified and cell-like characteristics exemplify an invading mentality, and in contrast to the open, spreading, foliated organism of the depicted Arab town, the settlement may be seen to resemble the topographical equivalent of a cluster of cancer cells.

Despite the title of the section ("Interiors"), and the close range of the shot, the Israeli settlement is a study in exteriority, all reflective shell and blank windows. The blurb underneath the first shot emphasises and condenses this paradoxical territoriality: "*Settlement of Ramot, near Jerusalem, 1979. As the buildings neared completion, tenants were in short supply.*" The manipulation of framing is also evident in the caption for the third photograph which describes the effacement of the Jewish settlement and naturalises and historicizes the town by stressing organic and

human features: "*the foreground drops away, leaving only the Arab village, its mosque and houses surrounded by fruit trees, olive trees, and stone walls*" (74).

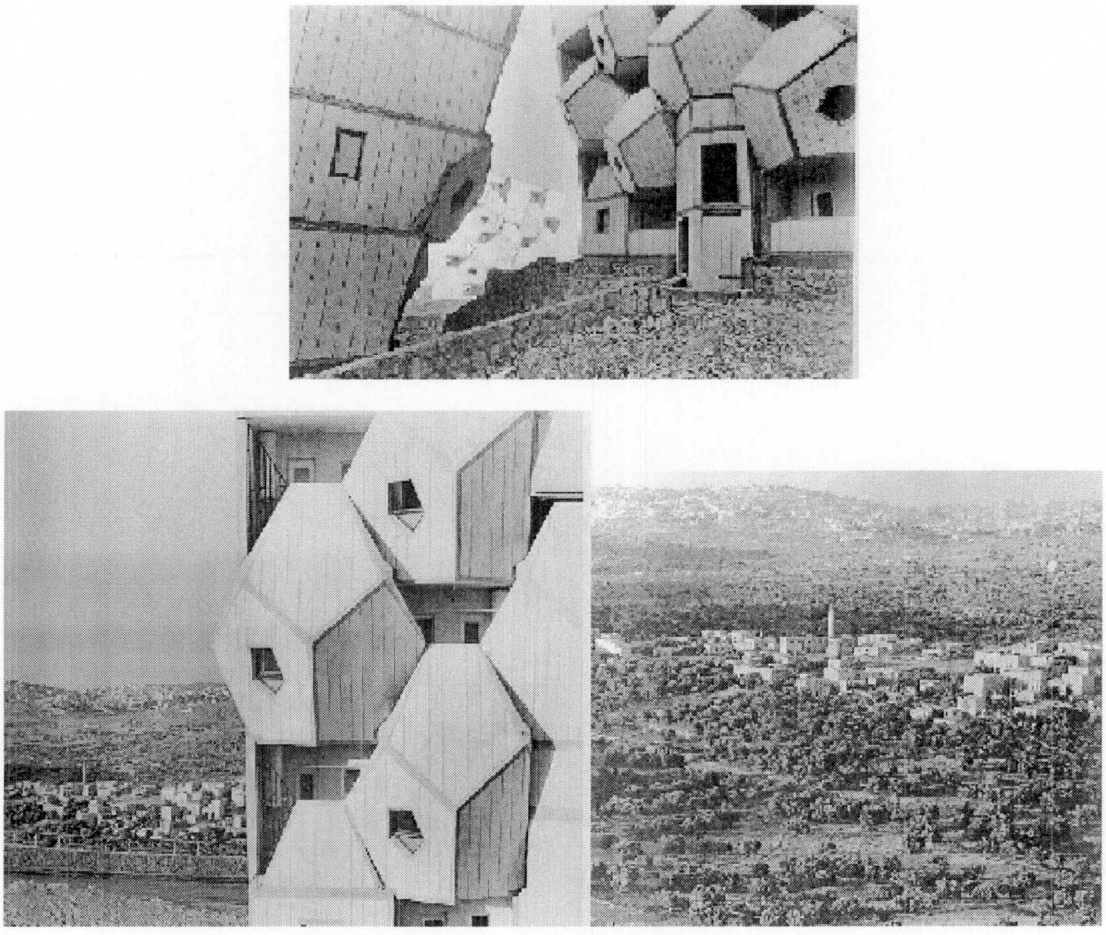

Fig. 5. (Said and Mohr 72-4).

Second level signification complicates and informs the construction and juxtaposition of the photographs and their subjects. Despite the official building programme and the international backing implied by the surrounding narrative of "terrorist chic", the settlement building outpaces the demand for settler housing, in this case. The "emptiness" of these threatening structures is narrated then demonstrated with their being "drop[ped] away" and contrasted with the culturally packed Arab village. By this means, Said and Mohr can be seen to affect a radical, if imaginary, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

Territorialising Himself: *Out of Place*, into History.

Of course, the figure of Said himself is part of the "territory" that is subject to a radical manipulation. So far I have indicated his personal place, textually, as an interpreter and site of diasporic mediation. Yet Said's project, and Said as a subject, should not only represented as a narrative linking device. When his diasporic approach becomes reflexive, how does he construct himself as a subject that challenges the singularity of exile? To answer this question, I will look "extratextually", at the commentary of others, and then at his recent memoir, *Out of Place.*

First, as an individual subject in focus, his position needs to be defined in relation to the key subjects of his utterance. Politically, Said has a very clear position, as a spokesperson for Palestinian rights and sometimes an affiliate of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. His eminence as a scholar and well-known cultural theorist present him with an opportunity (some would say privilege) to speak to a wide audience about his subjects of concern. These concerns, though, are not always popular. Said is not a "moderate", as Christopher Hitchens has examined the term, where "moderation" is hostage to the desires of the powerful (and their accompanying press-corps), and "moderate" Arabs should feel the reasonableness of abdicating rights and legitimate claims in the interests of establishing an unequal, marginalized (and selective) "peace" (Hitchens). Instead, "Said" can be seen to construct himself from various mediated positions that give rise to an ultimate desire for diasporic subjectivity.

Where does this desire emanate from? I argue that his personal assumption of the diasporic characteristics of a community can be attributed to the desires presented in his "exilic" childhood: a desire for connection and definition. The reconstructive

identification at play in his memoir, present in the title of *Out of Place* and resonating powerfully in its narrative focus, is the figure of unstable translation:

> [a]ll families invent their parents and children, give each of them a story, character, fate, and even a language. There was always something wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit in with the world of my parents and four sisters. Whether this was because I constantly misread my part or because of some deep flaw in my being I could not tell for most of my early life. Sometimes I was intransigent and proud of it. At other times I seemed to myself to be nearly devoid of any character at all, timid, uncertain, without will. Yet the overriding sensation I had was of always being out of place. (3)

Part of the sign for this personal displaced subjectivity has been the very label for his identity: his own (im)proper name. In both texts, Said displays an anxiety at the impropriety of his fused name. The elements represent a fusion of backgrounds that is of confusing, embarrassing, of shifting significance and is untrustworthy depending on the context:

> 'Edward', a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said. True my mother told me I had been named Edward after the Prince of Wales, who cut so fine a figure in 1935, the year of my birth, and Said was the name of various uncles and cousins. But the rationale of my name broke down both when I discovered no grandparents called Said and when I tried to connect my fancy English name to its Arabic partner. (3)

The enforced, common exile from Palestine is prefigured by the family's multiple complications of their "origins". The rewriting of family history in his naming (claiming a new surname and an aspiration towards a colonial signification) represents a continuing combination of movements to and from Palestine. It echoes his own father's representative movements, which give rise to the family's dual nationality (adopting America as an alternative, if barely believable, origin), the

slippery translation of Wadie to William, his business as an importer and distributor of Western business equipment throughout the Arab region, and multiple "homes" in Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine. Because of this, the family is constantly on the move, throughout the Middle East, to America, through various schools (modelled on various foreign traditions), and through different languages. Arabic may be his "mother tongue", but the doubtful signification of his name reflects the situation of being not at "home" in the many roles that Said has to rehearse.

Even the inclusion of a number of family portraits (on the cover and between pages 144-5) works against a fixity of identity. As Susan Sontag suggests, "[t]hrough photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself - a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness" (Sontag 8). Yet an examination of Said's family "portrait-chronicle" reveals a dispersal of roles and situations that establishes a mutual "connectedness", paradoxically, in change and separation. The Saids' image collection celebrates a diversity of subjects, from the mandatory family occasions (weddings, anniversaries, and graduations), through his father's various "masks" (American soldier, "Western" businessman, patron and "family man"), to Edward's roles as displayed extension to the family (baby son, brother, cousin) and traveller (*to* and *through* roles at the beach, the Sporting Club and the pyramids, dressed as a "traditional Palestinian", in prep-school uniform or as an American university student on "holiday" to the Middle-East). Far from celebrating a fixity of familial presence, the images of the Said family seem self-consciously to inhabit Sontag's "past that is unreal,[...] space in which they are insecure" (9).

Despite this, at the end of this book, Said's sense of himself as a disjunctive presence is linked with his awareness of multiple role-playing in a more positive manner. The linking of the disparate, at this point, resolves some of his anxiety of

placement by focussing on the benefits of being seemingly unresolved. Said envisions himself as a personal "exilic flow", celebrating the multiple affiliations and "freedoms" available to the displaced:

> I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of the solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents, like the themes of one's life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonising. They are "off" and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme. A form of freedom, I'd like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That scepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place. (295)

Although some of his subject positions may appear to reside in contrast to others, their juxtaposition transgresses "moderation". Instead, a process of "translation" functions where the various positions or roles that Said occupies effect a focus that "reflects (on) the gaps" between various social differences, just as Said reiterates the distance between the parts of his name, or the "currents of his life" (JanMohamed 457).

JanMohamed portrays Said as a "specular border intellectual", who has an awareness of his

> location outside the group in question... [and] a *jouissance* derived from transitoriness, from privileging process and relationship over allegiance to groups or to objects representing reified relationships;... privileg[ing] the pleasure of border-crossing and transgression. (JanMohamed, 457).

Illustrating this, Said's role as a scholar working out of Columbia University can signify a position of intellectual privilege and freedom of expression, in contrast to the type of aphasic exile described in *After the Last Sky.* Yet this position combines with his own exilic history, enabling him to champion their (his) cause. The same position as (a) part of (and from) the establishment of the United States, as a "player" in its infrastructure, allows him to challenge its superstructure from within, and without. The specifics of his situation as a somewhat privileged migrant complicate his stance on exile and politics in general.[41] Yet the existence of Israel as a block to his citizenhood of Palestine recreates conditions of exile in common with the rest of the diasporic community. Said's privilege, then, is appropriated as a means of expressing a diasporic subjectivity that strengthens his argument for exilic experience as something that can transcend the personal into a common experience.

As an advocate of a two-state solution to the situation of Palestine-Israel that he perceives gives a real chance for power-sharing and peaceful co-habitation, Said defines his position against a totality of desire for an irretrievable past. Instead, emphasising the need for a "secular" resolve that allows a dialogue between Arabs and Israelis, Said is equally wary of the religious extremism that is coupled with the militarism of all sides, and the ability of the Palestinian leadership to compromise themselves into a personal position of authority and their people into further submission. Said remains wary of compromise himself, though his own solution requires active "slippages" of position in *After the Last Sky.*

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[41] Aijaz Ahmad is particularly critical of what he sees as an equivocal position. While acknowledging the bravery of Said's nationalist convictions, Ahmad senses a weakness in the ambivalence of his political and critical theorising. The open contradictions apparent in valorising European high art and condemning the same tradition for its "orientalist" tone, championing European theory while declaiming the guilt of Western culutral traditions, and a particular focus on the accommodation of

Reterritorialising Movements.

The tactics of intervention and multiple displacement used by Said in *After the Last Sky* act in both a directly and indirectly political manner. The ironic situation of Said's being given access to a visionary "inside" of his homeland(s) from exile, by an "outsider" able to make multiple physical entries to the territory over a number of years, confirms one aspect of the exilic "double vision" that permeates the text. The possibility of Mohr's outsider status subverting Said's presentation of "insider knowledge" is addressed from the beginning through the means of an appeal to both expertise (a skilled photographic "eye") and political sympathy. Said's representation of Mohr, as photographer of the *ur*-text, United Nations' project, is couched in terms of a "knowledge" and "admiration" of previous work, especially that accompanying social critic, art historian and novelist, John Berger (3). Such a collaboration as *A Seventh Man,* which focussed on the plight of the millions of migrant workers in Europe, can be seen as exemplary of both the "style" and political affiliation of Mohr, able to mediate both the inside and outside of a situation that in some way mirrors that of Palestinians. Ironically, Mohr's Swiss nationality, with its connotation of "neutrality", masks his own "exilic" family background (from pre-WWII Germany) and an active involvement in Palestinian affairs from 1949 onwards, allowing access to the "Interior" of Palestinian experience in Israel and the Occupied Territories (8).

In contrast, Said's physical exile places him "outside" just at the time that Mohr begins to have access to the "inside", becoming increasingly reliant on memory, a consolidation of the "historical" register, and the mediation of messages and images (like Mohr's) from the inside. Mohr's role as "outsider" gifted with the ability to see "us as no one else has... [and also able to see] us as we would have seen ourselves - at

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bourgeois concerns are some of the vulnerabilities that are exposed by Ahmad. See "*Orientalism* and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said," (Ahmed 159-220).

once inside and outside and outside our world," is inflected with the recognition of a shared, exilic distance to the subject matter, which is concurrently unable to "speak for itself" (6). In this way, it is possible to see that the political situation, and Said's contestation of exilic status, leads him to assign Mohr an "honorary" status as Palestinian.

Collectively, Mohr and Said share features of "shiftiness", what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls the "inappropriate Other / Same":

> [t]he moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure.[...] Not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside / outside opposition, [his] intervention is necessarily that of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider. She is this Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about with always at least two/four gestures: that of affirming "I am like you" while persisting in her difference; and that of reminding "I am different" while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (74)

Mohr and Said occupy this complex position *together*: Mohr, the outsider slipping in and assuming a position like an insider, who slips out his photographic record; Said the insider exiled to the outside, who is, however, able to re-enter the inside through these records. Mohr's "insider" presence is noted in his honorary acceptance, as some one who sees Palestinians as they would be seen, and through the construction of the photographs, "deceptively" suggesting a physical presence in the scene by making concrete his momentary gaze. Said "slips" into the pictures with narratives of the

"insider" subject, with a gaze relayed by means of memory, historical and personal, still remaining as a figure articulating from the outside.

This type of "slip" can be seen in the deceptively simple invitation of the photographs and narrative that "opens" the section entitled "Interiors". The study of doorways (50, 53) enticingly part-open, is addressed by Said's rather abstract discussion of the Palestinian meanings of interior, followed by a suggestion of the multiple violations of cultural "privacy". Ironically, Said, as an outsider-insider is both interested in maintaining that privacy (based on a claim to insider knowledge), yet also has much invested in the opening up of this privacy (hence this book's project). In such a way, it is possible to view Said's "slips" as exemplary multiple border-crossings. Through his example he encourages others to participate in the like, in ways that both recognise and celebrate the confusion that such crossings, such transculturation, implicitly entail.

Slips of the Tongue: the Place(ments) of Nostalgia and Fighting Representations.

These slippages are also variously inflected with further slips (of nostalgia, self-recognition and bathos) that make the political agenda of the text even more sympathetic. The personal insertion of Said into one particular image demonstrates this tactic of personalising the political, "very well". Said states that "Jean Mohr's photograph of a small but clearly formed human group surrounded by a dense and layered reality expresses very well what *we* experience during that detachment from an ideologically saturated world." (47, emphasis added) Said follows this statement with a nostalgic epiphany, where *he* inserts himself, and a memory of the summer of 1942 on this scene, and yet is at the same time aware of multiple gazes at work, even as *he* assumes the collective experience (of "*we*"):

> My private past is inscribed on the surface of this peaceful but somehow brooding pastoral scene in the contemporary West Bank. I am not the only one surveying the scene. There is the child on the left [of the image] who looks on. There are also the Swiss photographer, compassionate, curious, silent, and of course the ever-present Israeli security services, who hold the West Bank and its population in the vice of occupation. As for those terraces and multiple levels; Do they serve the activities of daily life or are they the haunted stairs of a prison which, like Pranesi's, lead nowhere, confining their human captives? (48).

Fig. 6. "*Near Senjel, 1979.*" (Said and Mohr 47).

Said's figurative "slip" into the personal can be seen to operate in this example as a tactic of assuming power, addressing the political present through a comparison to a poignant personal memory and filtering "ideology" through the assumptions of a common humanity denied to the Palestinian "captives" of the West Bank (Osbourne, 139).

Several other interpretations of images are also to be noted that work in a similar way. A sequence of images are connected to what I alluded to above, a Palestinian "cult of physical strength,[...] obviously the response of the weak to a strong, visibly

dominating other," (54): one shows youths sparring on dusty (possibly bulldozed) ground, another, a young man bench pressing weights at a camp "youth club", and a third, a bus station plastered with posters advertising numerous karate films (54-7). Although a general point is made early, a personal story deepens and complicates this reading of "the response of the weak," interrogating Said's own position as a privileged outsider by both ironising and then reaffirming his credentials as an exilic representative.

The story revolves around the bathos of a message "smuggled" out of Arab Jerusalem by "the wife of a distinguished European literary figure" (54). When she "name-drops" Said into a conversation with an embroidery salesman, he professes to be "an acquaintance and admirer", and writes a note in Arabic for delivery to Said while expressing the particular Palestinian position of particular power and lack, superiority-inferiority, in the Arab world ("we are the Jews of the Arab world") (55). The Western "courier" notes complexities of nuance in the performance of the salesman (also performed for the benefit of an accompanying Israeli) that are beyond her understanding, but undertakes to convey the message to an "excited" Said, who is thrilled to be recognised from afar for his contributions to the Palestinian "cause" (55-6). Reading this note, however, Said realises that it consists of a repetition of his name in Roman script, and then, in Arabic, a claim to skill at karate. Said intially states, obviously disappointedly, that "there was nothing else" (56). Yet, despite "what may appear to outsiders as utter stupidity" he complicates his initial reading to note an element of resistance which, "for *us* scores a tiny, almost imperceptible point on the inside, as it were" (54):

> how typical of Palestinian insiders' communications - that odd bravado, not really meant to be a joke. The exchange of messages came almost naturally to both of us, given our

> situations. He was inside, and using the good offices of a sympathetic outsider to contact me, an insider who was now outside Jerusalem, the place of our common origin. That he wrote my name in English was as much a sign that he too could deal with the world I lived in as it was that he followed what I did, with some pride, perhaps, but also with the wariness of one who for too long has been 'represented' by Westernized intellectuals whose track record wasn't any too good. The time had come to demonstrate a healthy indication that the Edward Saids had better remember that we were being watched (by karate experts), somewhat approvingly, but also cautiously. Finally, his (to me) comic insistence on his physical skills revealed the same, often uninspired, assertion of self all of us seem to possess. He had already done his super-Palestinian routine for my friend, and probably knew that she would tell me; now he was doing it again, knowing that I would repeat the story. I have. (56)

Said interprets the message as a note from one insider to another, a type of coded "bravado", that slips expectations, yet also conveys a common bond of resistance, by origin, by medium, by self-assertion, by repetition. In his interpretation he, at once, acknowledges his position as outside (one who "represents" Palestinians) yet also confirms himself to a common experience, and a commonality of expressive form: the repetition of "inside" stories. To him the message exerts a reassuring influence, a familiarity of situation and address that goes beyond the "inane" surface even as it does not provide "anything new or outside it that might be illuminating". For those in exile, there is a practice of connection, of interface with "exilic flow", in

> repeating familiar patterns to the point where repetition itself becomes more important than what is being repeated. in the rigorous discipline of repetition, as my karate expert knew perfectly, you cannot get out of it, cannot easily transform it into a symbol of something else. Karate does not stand for self-development, but only for the repeated act of being a Palestinian karate expert. A Palestinian. (56)

Of course, it is typical within the representations of this text that "Palestinian-ness" is articulated through knowledge of a globalised resistant taste, a borrowed form of self-defence available to those in a state of exile. Here, as elsewhere where these "slips" occur (as in the misrecognition of a relative on pages 84-5), Said is able to express the complexity of a diasporic consciousness, without diluting the emancipatory message of the text as a whole.

Said's exilic double-vision acknowledges that the images of "home" and "travel" implicit in neo-colonial narratives of "globalisation" are problematic. I have shown, through an examination of some of his writings, that both states and statement are connected in a battle for narrative form, an encounter that has wide implications for the subjects of the modern world, and historical, political placement. Said contends that

> Historical understanding is the comprehension of what human beings do and what they cannot do.... [H]istorical truth has to be plausible, it must be able to place events in the proper context, it must be free of exaggeration, it must not be partisan, it must focus on what human beings did, and so on. (*End* 245).

Hence, Said's connections with subjectivity, encompassed in a portrayal of multiple subjects that include himself, set up a model that seeks to counter a particular "monadic" text: the national singularity of Israel. In its place, Said's project incorporates a process of shifting subjects out from under the gaze of the West, and the stories it tells about its "periphery", "explanations [that] are really quite far from rational, secular, or plausible" (*End* 245). Using acts of intervention, he seeks to reverse the expropriations of history by reappropriating and linking Palestinian subjects to a history and (multiply) reterritorialised Palestine: *re*placing Palestinians "in the proper context."

Stylistically, Said's writing mirrors this shifting project. In both of the Said texts I have concentrated on, the subjects of the photographically mediated gaze are continually complicated by the narrative resignification, to the point where Said shifts under his own narrative gaze: from the acted upon subject of exile to the agency and connection of diaspora. Dispossession is both a theme and effect of such a process, leading to what JanMohamed calls Said's "homelessness-as-home". Said's vision is both personally and politically engaged with "home" as a site of contested identity and insecurity, resulting in a process of "travelling that has broken down, come apart,[...] '[we] ride conveyances without movement or power.'" (Said and Mohr).

Being able to shift position between the outside and inside, between being an observer and a participant, Said strikes a personal subjective position able to make a move from exile to diaspora, that allows for hybrid solutions to the questions of nationality and cultural placement and ironically expresses this lack of "movement or power" both movingly and powerfully. As such, Said as a subject, and the subjects he narrates prove important in tracing the points in between a celebratory, Western travelling subject and other available practices of displacement. Within this chapter's focus, I have considered terms of "dwelling" and the notion of "states" against the perception of exilic distance. The relationship between the insularity of exile and the staged creation of a state, even in the mind, melds into a practice of diaspora.

Diaspora demonstrates the possibility of movement between key travel terms, and is a valuable comparison to the other modes of displacement that I examine in the context of this study. In terms of the connections with my analyses of "tourist" and "nomadic" writers, many features of exile appear to equate with a privileged, singular performance of travel, whereas diaspora indicates a communal practice. Diaspora has become a very popular signification of displacement and replacement in recent years,

allowing pan-applicable traits of dispersal and ultimate connection. Although the term envisions a diversity of particular cultural modifications from the shared origin, the level of connectivity, and "national" identifications, also work in opposite, homogenizing direction; to the extreme, perhaps, of being perceived alongside the often-undifferentiated view of tourism. Following on from this association with diaspora, then, it is appropriate that I consider, in the next chapter, similar strategies from the position of the "migrant" subject writing.

FOUR.

Migrant Aesthetics: (Un)settlement, (no)Nationhood, Home(less)ness?

> Migration is a one-way trip. There is no "home" to go back to. (Stuart Hall 44).

> "The past is a foreign country," goes the famous opening sentence of L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between,* "they do things differently there." But the photograph [of my family home] tells me to invert this idea; it reminds me that it's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.
> (Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 20).

> I had already planned the journey back.... I realised I would be travelling back to the family I had grown from - those relations from my parents' generation who stood in my memory like a frozen opera. I wanted to touch them into words.
> (Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family* 22).

In this chapter, I continue an examination of roving literary imaginations, this time addressing the implications of a so-called "migrant aesthetic" in contemporary writing: a shifting aesthetic fittingly matched in the tendency of migrant authors to shift in their writings from "factual" to "fictional" fields of literary production (Chambers 6). As with the exilic and diasporic subjects examined in the previous chapter, the construction of *home* and *history* are crucial in the processes of cultural placement and envisioning location that are basic to the conception of migrant subjects. In many respects, the similarities between the figuration of migrant

characteristics and those of the exile or diasporic community are striking. However, the separation of these terms suggests that there are some distinctions and differences noted, conventionally. I will analyse the significance of what appear to be fairly artificial demarcations, questioning the evaluative practices at work in this separation by means of an examination of a sample of texts from a migrant literary group currently popular internationally: fiction writers originating from South Asia. Although my main focus is on texts by Salman Rushdie and Michael Ondaatje, the "place" of other migrant works also receives attention. As part of this examination, I look further into the negotiations between privilege and displacement, mainly in terms of class but also, to an extent, gender, and question the degree to which the reproduction and commodification of marketable "difference" within a globalised literary economy co-opts an alternative, proliferating and pluralistic version of globalisation. The subjects I focus on, then, are as much within the figurative "migration" between Western and "other" cultural affiliation, the travelling "in-between-ness" of production, as the specific practices and subjects of writing.

Shifting Terminology.

I will argue that the prominence of "émigré" authors like Rushdie and Ondaatje requires addressing in terms of its value within this globalised context. These are writers whose origins are South Asian but whose work reflects multiple shifts in insider-outsider status deriving from the negotiations between placement historically "tainted" by involvement in and distance from both homeland and host culture. Reflecting on a mode of displacement often belittled by those artists, critics and politicians who would rather construct cultural identity around heroic modes of

narrative, I would contend that migrant experience often has to resist heroically the repercussions of this treatment.

Those critical of migrant subjects often castigate them in terms similar to those levelled at tourists. I argue that the news media, and many outspoken politicians, portray migrants as rootless, bereft of strong cultural affiliations, or inflexible and invasive, overly commercial in focus (whether this focus represents the financial elite or a destitute underclass, burdensome to the new host culture), and generally untrustworthy. In my own local context, New Zealand, the politician Winston Peters demonstrates the effectiveness of focussing on these disparate and grossly generalising "traits", in terms of rallying a voter-following easily led to fixate on "scapegoat" issues (Clifton). Of course, Peters' position on immigrant "bludgers," is one that connects with populist xenophobia worldwide.

This kind of "populist" portrayal carries over into literary representation, where these generalisations are often repeated or implicitly subsumed (Kaplan 4-5). Such hostility can result in immigrants' reacting strongly, which sometimes plays into the hands of those advancing these stereotypes. However, representing a greater and more varied impact and definition of migrant experience, mostly in the contexts of Britain, North America and their "homelands", the writings I examine in this chapter demand the reconsideration of the migrant subject in placement theory, in terms of ethnicity, class and gender, and against other terms of travel. The strategies of revision, intervention and creative advocacy to be found in these authors' work requires a re-evaluation of negative accounts of migration, renegotiating its place from the critical margins to an awareness of an emergent, multiple status amongst "globalised" modes of displacement.

Placing Migrant Subjects.

While the connotations of enforced separation continue to privilege those considered "exiled", ironically, the perceived ability to choose to travel, and aspects of privilege associated with migration, whatever the actual details of immigrants' backgrounds, often receive a critical response. The migrant occupies an elitist position in the minds of many, met with a counterbalancing denigration and devaluation. This treatment highlights how much some critics ignore the presence of migrant figures representing differentiated social status and agency and the problems of the ambivalent relationship to a homeland distanced by intervening years and experience with another, host culture. The complexities of migrant subject positioning can tend to be effaced by this overemphasis on the economic impulse to travel that ignores the high degree of variation within even this motivating factor for migration.

In the previous chapter, I considered the position of Edward Said in terms of the strategic shift between an exilic and diasporic consciousness. This examination dealt with some people who could alternatively be called migrants: Palestinians either forced, or choosing, to emigrate. This category includes Said's family itself and also encompasses those considered "refugees". Similarly, Said also raised the plight of those dependent on a transmigratory commuting between marginalized, Arab settlements and Israeli sites of employment for survival. Why then am I separating these two positions: diasporic-exilic subjects and migrants? I am doing so to reflect on the distinctions already made between these separate types of subject, in a way that will emphasize the artificial nature of distinct, "fixed" categories. Taking a lead from Ahmad's argument, the implications for Said's positioning of this migration within an exposition of a dispersed, oppositional nationalism may appear contradictory (Ahmad

161). Said's positioning of this population abroad may suggest a strategy for containment and return that are contrary to a "migrant aesthetic", as Stuart Hall perceives it. However, although a Palestinian nationalism postulated from abroad surely introduces a complexity (and an element of internationalism) into any definition of migrant nationhood, I argue that the imaginary and real returns of diasporic subjectivity *are* available to migrants.

Examining one of my epigraphs, Hall's definition of migration as limited to a strictly one-way displacement (or, maybe more accurately, the implication that a "migrant" cannot become another type of traveller), I must suggest a degree of scepticism. The terms "exile" and "migrant", after all, display several similarities. Both terms suggest isolation from an original culture or homeland, and also represent processes of grouping, collecting and eliding the differences into generic practices; both desire return. Both also demand a "diasporic" connection to occur in order to escape the trap of a static past and ghetto mentality: results likely from an isolated presence in the host culture. Consequently, diasporic tendencies in migrants bring to attention the conception of distance between migrants and their "national" or notional homelands, and how this distance is related or mediated, or travelled.

In addition, consideration of migrant "national" subjects leads to thinking in terms of building a sense of new international identity (nevertheless retaining all the old, socialist, associations with this term): one that bridges difference in host and migrant cultures by the recognition and concession of both unlike and shared perspective. Such an awareness might describe a differentiated globalising tendency, trans- or post-national in its scope yet retaining a realisation of cultural genealogy. Looking at authors such as Rushdie and Ondaatje allows an intimation of what a trans- or post-national literature might be. Such a literature is one not bereft of a "national" past but

is aware of the complex negotiations attempted on an everyday basis by a large proportion of the world's population who are "at home in the world" by being not at home but, rather, on the move. Of course, this is not to underplay the contradictions of such a situation. Whereas I treat these authors as an example of this movement towards trans- or post-national identity, this version of a globalised artifice does not exclude a continuation of national and cultural boundaries, classes of transnational elites, and the dangers of a practice co-opted by cultural imperialism.

The Mark(eting) of the Migrant.

The ideological significance of the term "migrant", with its long association with economic and class privilege, suggests the reader should be wary of assimilation and acculturation in the work of both Rushdie and Ondaatje. This needs to be addressed. Caren Kaplan notes that "the figure of the immigrant" occupies a position "counter to those most valued by Euro-American modernism":

> rather than embodying the desire to return to a lost origin, the immigrant is represented as eager to reject that origin; instead of a spiritual or creative identity or profession, the immigrant is associated with less romantic forms of labour - even, simply, with purely material motives, ranging from physical survival to elite careerism. (Kaplan 110).

Even if we ignore, for the moment, the contended lack of desire for "return to a lost origin", the devalorised, overly material characterisation Kaplan sees projected upon an "immigrant" subject-position is blinkered in its perspective. The concentration by Rushdie and Ondaatje on their own migration, displayed also in their relation of other migrant histories, represents more than "purely material motives." Yet the belittlement of even these motives needs to be challenged.

Certainly, the lucrative rewards and awards implicit and explicit in the celebratory circuit of Western publishing and receptive scholarship provide grounds for charges

of a co-opting practice. The South Asian authors examined have received various Western literary prizes, including the Booker Prize (a somewhat dubious honour judged against the sponsor's colonial connections [Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic* 106-7]), which arguably serves to absorb the oppositional element in their work and yet also seeks to realign it into an attractive exoticism. Rushdie and Ondaatje have been accused of wilful exoticism in their own right,[42] of a complicity in the pandering to Western tastes that characterises the position of these authors. As Huggan argues, the assimilation and "marketing" of figures like Rushdie and Ondaatje can be partially read as an attempt to shore-up, "rejuvenate" and protect "the beleaguered mainstream [Western] culture" through the cultural production of a multicultural veneer (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic,* 117). This kind of use of their work is undoubtedly present in the profit-motivated drive for sales (which reflects back on Western publishing houses and critical institutions, and is also reflected in the reputed size of advances paid to Rushdie) and also in the selection of an exotic taste to distract (for instance in the case of the Booker corporation) from a bitter-sweet legacy of plantation exploitation or shift towards the domain of "imperialist nostalgia" (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic,* 117). However, Huggan is also quick to defend: indicating that the material success involved in the cultural production of their texts does not fully obscure the shared "strategically self-conscious exoticism" and "historical revisionism" of their projects (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic,* 116). Despite attempts to contain their writings by positioning them amongst the contradictions of token, centralised marginality, both Rushdie and Ondaatje produce versions and visions of migrants that counter the suppression of their experience and attempt to liberate narrative perspectives that may prove valuable as examples for subaltern emancipation.

[42] For example, see A. Mukherjee; Ahmad 126-7.

Allied in Divergent Subjects: More Defining Strategies.

Both authors conceive in the figure of the migrant an essential part of decolonising re-evaluations of globalised, imperial structures. Although the economic factor remains a central characteristic in this project, as an important feature in the illumination of migrant conditions and as a factor in assessing the authors' own stake in the narration, Rushdie and Ondaatje treat economics and politics alongside other aspects of ideology in the deconstruction of the "migrant" subject. Their strategy appears to be to affiliate themselves with a mixed class of migrants, in order to examine the specific conditions and experiences of migrants and construct solidarity within migrant subjectivities.

In this endeavour they are supported by a legacy of other critical re-evaluations of migrancy. As John Berger emphasizes, the historical and symbolic determinism of migrancy estranges the participants from realising their own agency:

> his migration is like an event in a dream dreamt by another. As a figure in a dream by an unknown sleeper, he appears to act autonomously, at times unexpectedly; but everything he does unless he revolts - is determined by the needs of the dreamer's mind. Abandon the metaphor. The migrant's intentionality is permeated by historical necessities of which neither he nor anybody he meets is aware. That is why it is as if his life were being dreamt by another. (Berger and Mohr 43).

Berger's analysis considers the economically dictated social relations between migrant labourers and host culture in terms of an unwelcome accommodation. As I discussed in relation to Said, labour alienates, displacement in labourers alienates further. Just as Bourdieu places "necessity" within working class taste (*Distinctions*), Berger constructs subjects that are couched in a system of distinctions and barriers to the expression of their condition(s). Working class migrant taste, and the discursive code associated with this taste, has subaltern status apparently requiring mediation.

Hence the value of "in-between" figures like Rushdie and Ondaatje, able to "read" these experiences from a less distant social position. As Bharati Mukherjee, another migrant South Asian author, writes:

> I have joined imaginative forces with an anonymous, driven, underclass of semi-assimilated Indians with sentimental attachments to a distant homeland but no real desire for permanent return. I see my "immigrant" story replicated in a dozen American cities, and instead of seeing my Indianness as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration (or worse, a "visible" disfigurement to be hidden), I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated.[...] Indianness is now a metaphor a particular way of partially comprehending the world. (*Darkness* 3)

Yet this kind of ethnic, or "national," allegory of identity allows more socially privileged writers to suppress their differences in considering the common factors of their experience in facing a commonly alien environment. The impression of equivalence misleads when considered alongside the class and cultural formation of privilege that constructs Western tastes, and is often integral to educated, bourgeois migrants (Brennan 34). In as much as these privileged writers seek to faithfully reproduce and bring to light the particular conditions of migrancy, this mediation is both naturalised and brought to the foreground in an awareness of the common or equivalent features present in writer and "underclass" subjects of writing. Based on the elision of difference, though, or perhaps the naturalising of it into a classlessness of category, a globalised "other" opposed to Western postmodernism or postmodernity (Ahmad 126, after Jameson), I feel this tactic displays a desire to hide the patterns of dominance persisting within migrant culture: the solidarity with *lack* that many writers approach from a distance. Writers like Ondaatje and Rushdie would appear to have their work cut out for them, in terms of faithful representation of their "underclass" brothers and sisters.

The more positive, postmodern agency attributed to the figure of the migrant subject in contemporary theory, instead celebrates the dislocation from societal ties. Paul Carter suggests that the viewpoint of the migrant is one that may be particularly valuable to understanding the complexities of contemporary culture:

> An authentically migrant perspective would, perhaps, be based on an intuition that the opposition between here and there is itself a cultural construction, a consequence of thinking in terms of fixed entities and defining them in oppositionally. It might begin by regarding movement, not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but as a mode of being in the world. The question would be, then, not how to arrive, but how to move, how to identify convergent and divergent movements; and the challenge would be how to notate such events, how to give them a historical and social value. (Carter 101).

In Carter's analysis, the position of the migrant seems to echo the "nomadic" resolutions of Deleuze and Guattari (assessed in relation to Chatwin in an earlier chapter), emphasising the "new" concern with movement, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation as a means of redressing oppressive social and political institutions. However, I feel it is important to note that Carter is talking about migrants in a "settler" culture society, those displaying relative ease in realigning their agency compared to less privileged types of immigrant. Nevertheless, a figure such as Rushdie certainly plays on this poststructuralist vision of unfixity. Another cultural critic, Iain Chambers, is more inclusive of different travelling subjects:

> To be forced to cross the Atlantic as a slave in chains, to cross the Mediterranean or the Rio Grande illegally, heading hopefully North, or even to sweat in slow queues before officialdom, clutching passports and work permits, is to acquire the habit of living between worlds, caught on a frontier that runs through your tongue, religion, music, dress, appearance and life. To come from elsewhere, from "there" and not "here", and

> hence to be simultaneously "inside" and "outside" the situation at hand, is to live at the intersections of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routes. It is simultaneously to encounter the languages of powerlessness and the potential intimations of heterotopic futures. (Chambers, 6).

Chamber's categorising repositions the unsettled and marginalized "place" of migrant imagination at the centre of new formations of culture, in a way that refigures it alongside the modes of displacement of the exile, the refugee and the construction of a "diasporic" consciousness.

The celebration of migrant status, along with its denigration, then, can be viewed in relation to the other practices I have examined in previous chapters, becoming part of an emergent, shifting labelling of subjects that challenges the fixity of categorical definition, and adjunctive desire for monological discourse. The "voice" of the migrant displays this dual engagement with powerlessness and potential, the simultaneity of being both "'inside' and 'outside' the situation at hand" that reflects a connection with other displacements. Voices of exiles become those of migrants and vice versa, and the connection with the past, with a sense of notional "nationhood" and origin, continues to pervade narratives of these unsettled peoples. Even when desired by migrants, attempts to sever the connection with the past are hampered by reminders of cultural connection maintained through signifiers of difference, both positively celebrated and used for the purpose of historical exclusion in host countries. However, I argue that the degree of effectiveness to which "migrant aesthetes" can systematically challenge and seize the discursive means for their own representation relies on the differences in their travel praxis and "placement" in relation to their subjects. As I will discuss, the options open to Rushdie and Ondaatje may appear similar. They share many features of social and artistic background.

However, their engagements with a "migrant aesthetic" display important divergences in terms of whose story they are telling, the tone and political responsibility transmitted in their treatment of subjects. I argue that the degree of "distance" apparent between the place of the author and his subject is a key determining factor in this effectiveness.

Rushdie and the Comic Dimensions of Migration.

Rushdie is a writer who has been on the move so much himself that he parallels the range of travels associated with a "nomadic" figure like Chatwin. This comparison is partly warranted, in that Rushdie accompanied Chatwin on one of the short trips to the Australian outback that were instrumental to the creation of *The Songlines.* However, while Chatwin's chief focus is demonstrably on the postmodernist literary reinvention of a "golden age" of wandering (as discussed in an earlier chapter), Rushdie's conception of displacement constantly returns to the modes of migration and "exile" amongst the key concerns examined in his writings: a focus that also connects him to Edward Said. Yet, in examining Rushdie's "migrant" subjectivity, I argue that he is both more "out of place" than Said, presenting a constant moving target (partly a practical consideration, in the light of his more vociferous critics), and yet also very much a "home-body": though "at home" in his fantasy-histories rather than in the real subjects they appear to refer to.

In his history of writing, Rushdie has assumed different author positions attributed to different styles of text: assuming the roles of fabulist, journalist, critic and theorist, publishing collections of critical essays, stories and novels. However, within his oeuvre, and suggestively emphasised in his collection *East-West*, Rushdie writes complexly fragmented and associative stories which display a vibrant

transmigration of contacts and connections between two "homes": East and West. In his border-crossing activities he echoes Ondaatje's construction of alternative histories, but with some very apparent distinctions. Rushdie's fabulatory practice merges several contradictory modes of discourse: his version of "magic realism" injects the fantastic elements of political and cultural reality into unreal imaginary dimensions of everyday experience, crossing comic-tragic designs and significations, shadowing and paralleling histories in several different registers, familial, national, and linguistic, in spiralling patterns of puns. Rushdie has become famous as an author, both for the content and style of his work, yet also for the passionate extremes that are excited by his work. Capturing this antagonism in the relation to his reception and significance, Timothy Brennan indicates the strengths and weaknesses of Rushdie's migrant aesthetic:

By bringing to the surface for discussion all the interlocking debates of decolonisation, Rushdie, more than anyone else writing in English, has made English literary tradition international. And he has done this precisely by dramatising the totality of the components that make up that tradition – including those colonies and minorities until now referred to only from the safety of the "centre." But by doing so, he has also taken on another kind of responsibility, which is to the decolonisation struggles he interprets (and translates) for a Western reading public. The fullness and complexity of their collective visions are often foreshortened in the personal filter of Rushdie's fiction. (166)

Hence even the strength of Rushdie's work, the ability to introduce decolonising material into the "centre," is limited by its accommodation and translation into a staged site for westernised readers. The return of this subjective material, and this

writing subject, to the original sites from which they emigrated, is made difficult by this modification.

Dangerous Laughter.

In the wake of the notorious reception of *The Satanic Verses,* the connection can here be made between Rushdie's "most serious" and "most comic book" which allows me to question whether this migratory text is a potent vehicle of an oppositonal, migrant aesthetic. As in many of his other texts, black humour seems to be a vehicle for expressing some of his most serious concerns, not only the tinderbox issue of religious fundamentalism, but also "about migration, metamorphosis, divided selves, love, death, London and Bombay" (Rushdie qtd. in Appiganesi and Maitland 44). These focal areas are of central importance to Rushdie, caught as he is between worlds, a migrant standing for multiplicity of locations: geographically, physically, culturally and politically.

For *The Satanic Verses* to be seen as a book pivotal in its addressing of the migrant position of in-between-ness, I must address the role of Rushdie's "tone." Rushdie's liminal position offers perspectives of strange disparity and irony that he assumes into the treatment of his subject. In this, Rushdie's attitude is both self-deprecatory and satirical, akin to the notion of laughing at the sufferings inflicted upon you, and also similar to that of the Palestinian figure of the "pessoptimist" that Said deploys (Said and Mohr 26). Although much of his work stands out as being very funny in its own right, and relies on stock devices of farce, punning, analeptic and proleptic irony, this in-between-ness of cross-cultural reference extends the humour, just as the humour ultimately becomes a vehicle for addressing the implications of this reference-field. Furthermore, all of these "stock" techniques

could figuratively be termed migrant, dependent on shifts between various sites and points in his text for signification; the comic aspect of his writing is dependent on the revelatory disjuncture, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and mistranslation present in migrant experience. Rushdie's earlier and much fêted novel, *Midnight's Children*, contains some truly comic gems of a light variety, from the poignantly witty description of a courtship carried out through a perforated sheet, to the farcical conversion of a Superman comic into a religious narrative; these devices, however, reveal a multiple, cross-cultural mediation that knowingly subverts orientalist narrativity. Rushdie's play on "a thousand and one nights" redirects the popular orientalist translation into an absurd refabulation, ironising the exotic charms of the discreet parts of Saleem's grandmother displayed to his grandfather in instalments as a manipulative device of pornography and marketing controlled by a father keen to marry off his child to a doctor (*Midnight's Children* 27). Similarly, the repackaging of Superman as a Western-Eastern cult satirises the gullibility of a certain type of orientalist gaze, and reveals disjunctive comic effect of material subject to migration and hybridity (*Midnight's Children* 267-70).

The light touch, comic timing and flair for expressing the ridiculous evident in *The Satanic Verses* also rely on an abundant cross-cultural movement of material. This is clear from the first page, with the farcical, absurd, and cartoonish depiction of two falling characters, who can joke around even as they plummet from "twenty-nine thousand and two feet, towards the English Channel, without the benefit of parachutes or wings out of a clear blue sky":

> Gibreel, the tuneless soloist, had been cavorting in moonlight as he sang his impromptu gazal, swimming in air, butterfly-stroke, breast-stroke, bunching himself into a ball, spreadeagling himself against the almost-infinity of the almost-dawn, adopting heraldic postures, rampant, couchant, pitting levity against gravity. Now he rolled happily

> towards the sardonic voice. 'Ohé, Salad baba, it's you, too good. What-ho, old Chumch.' At which the other, a fastidious shadow falling headfirst in a grey suit with all the jacket buttons done up, arms by his sides, taking for granted the improbability of the bowler hat on his head, pulled a nick-name hater's wince, 'Proper London, bhai! Here we come! Those bastards down there won't know what hit them. Meteor or lightning or vengeance of God. Out of thin air, baby. *Dharrraaammm!* Wham, na? What an entrance, yaar. I swear: splat.' [3]

The situational comedy displayed in such a scene is encapsulated in the phrase "pitting levity against gravity": a phrase that Brennan suggests sets up both Rushdie's metaphysical allegory of extremes, and also signals the comic tone at play in this allegorical treatment (151). The visual and verbal clowning by Gibreel, an inappropriate relish displayed for the situation alongside the strangely metaphysical intonation of doom resides alongside the cutting "sardonic voice" of Chamcha, and a different kind of inappropriateness in his formal dress and physical attitude. In this very first page we are introduced to the apparent comic pairing of straight and funny man that may be taken to characterise the two central figures in the novel.

Yet this apparent lightness can be deceptive. The gravity of this opening scene is apparent in the falling of these two migrant figures towards the unforgiving Metropolis and from the explosion of their highjacked plane. Also, as the book progresses, the "funny" man, Gibreel Farishta, proves to be "funny" in more than a comical sense, and the "straightness" of Saladin Chamcha is as a stuffed-shirt act in danger of a farcical explosion: transmogrifications that access the dreamlike connections between cultures, dwelling in stereotype, role-playing and mass delusion. Comedy increasingly introduces these serious thematic elements which oscillate between apparent realism and the fantastic: in Rushdie's language *The Satanic Verses* belongs to a

> great tradition in art, the one in which techniques of comedy, metaphor, heightened imagery, fantasy and so on are used to break down our conventional, habit-dulled

> certainties about what the world is and has to be. Unreality is the only weapon with which reality can be smashed, so that it may subsequently be reconstructed. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 122).

At Home in the World.

While Salman Rushdie's comic vision openly engages with the political sphere in expressing a migrant aesthetic, some authors seem to believe that it is possible to sever themselves from references to their surrounding environment. Certainly, as the position of the migrant in Western society has often been portrayed as apolitical and commercially-orientated, a residual distrust of Rushdie's political affiliative practice is notable. This type of criticism can be traced to an unlikely exponent. Looking back on the thirties, with their legacy of literary political affiliations, George Orwell wondered if it is not preferable to become a "subjective introverted writer." He sees, after all, that

> there are many worse things than being swallowed by whales...there you are, in the dark, cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and the reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference whatever happens. (Orwell, "Inside the Whale" 151-2).

Such a position seems strange, as Orwell himself obviously engaged with ideological concerns in many of his own writings, and took a "worldly" stance in activities outside literature, for instance, when he fought in the Spanish Civil War.[43] Contrary to this stance of a possible artistic insulation from the "storms" of the real world, Rushdie argues:

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[43] Political disillusionment and ill-health may have influenced Orwell at this critical juncture. However, Rushdie's reading of Orwell, on which this point rests, is perhaps less nuanced of Orwell's position that he deserves.

> Outside the whale is the unceasing storm, the continual quarrel, the dialectic of history... there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world... we see that we are all irradiated by history, we are radioactive with history and politics; we see that it can be as false to create a politics-free fictional universe as to create one in which nobody needs to work or eat or hate or love or sleep. Outside the whale it becomes necessary, and even exhilarating, to grapple with the special problems created by the incorporation of political material, because politics is by turns farce and tragedy, and sometimes both at once. (*Imaginary Homelands* 100).

Terry Eagleton also argues the impossibility of artists isolating themselves from "radioactive" politics and history; he contends that literature "has [always] been indissociably bound up with political beliefs and ideological values" (Eagleton 194). It is only in the degree of consciousness of the political, and in the act of interpretation, that artists and critics differ.

In my examination, I see Rushdie's take on "politics" as an integral, conscious part of his work. Political satire is curiously mixed with elements of the "fabulous" within much of Rushdie's work, for example, in his consistently returned to treatment of the Gandhi family. In "The Free Radio" (in *East West*) Rushdie uses pathos and humour to ridicule Sanjay Gandhi's sterilisation program, with Ram the sterilised rickshaw man, imaginatively willing into existence his missing radio bribe, and, concurrently, satirical argument against the "mediated imagination" represented in the emasculating promise of the radio and Bollywood (19-32). Similarly, in *Midnight's Children* there is a darkly conceived vision both of Indira Gandhi personally, and the "widow's" political project of neutering the country during the State of Emergency.

Srinivas Aravamudan notes even more reference to the Gandhis at the beginning of *The Satanic Verses*, with a fairly complicated, migratory argument leading from a

numerological consideration, through "terrorism", and to the role of aircraft. First, Aravamudan notes that Gibreel's song, "'O, my shoes are Japanese...'", is quoted from the '50s film "*Shri Charsawbees* (Mr 420)". This number could, apparently be both an oblique reference to a colonial Criminal Code dealing with fraud and confidence tricks and also a later, successful election campaign against Indira Gandhi (Aravamudan 190-2).[44] Aravamudan also links the destruction of the *Bostan* (incidentally a reference to an Islam's edenic garden) by Sikhs with the deaths of Indira and Sanjay (by Sikh assassins and a plane crash) and Rajiv's former career as a pilot (Aravamudan 190-2; Walker 354). As Rushdie stated in an interview: "this whole generation either falls out of planes, or gets shot or hanged. None of these people has had a quiet end" (Jain 39). More blatantly and *successfully* provocative is the satire of the Ayatollah in the form of the bloodthirsty, humourless Imam, literal killer of time and secular dissent (215).

Rushdie also uses elements of the carnivalesque to humorously expose serious issues, and maintain a movement between them. Satire, deriving its meaning from "a medley of dishes", has its cultural equivalent in the form of the carnival and a migrant sensibility (Rose 80). This "polyphonic" form Rushdie sees as inherently positive, "multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities" (Engblom 301). It is also a form that is intrinsically humorous, functioning, as it does, to break down the normal "strategies of containment" through inversions and transformations.

In *The Satanic Verses* it is the metamorphoses of Saladin Chamcha that most prominently display this comic movement. Born Saladihun Chamchawala, the adaptation of his name displays his principal activity of attempted adaptation into his

[44] The campaign apparently rested on graffiti "shorthand" of "4 + 20 = 420" (Sanjay's 4-point program, including sterilization, plus Indira's 20 point program for national growth, equals a confidence trick - "420").

adopted country, England. The translation of what his name actually means though, betrays the inherent tensions of such an exercise. Saladin is the name of the Moslem hero victorious in fighting the crusaders of Western Europe. Chamcha is equally loaded, being slang for "spoon" (hence "Spoono"), "toadie", "follower," and also denoting effeminacy (Aravamudan 199-200). The abbreviated, repressed version of his name fits his desire to fit in straight and proper, into "proper England", and represents a turning of his back on his past: family, country, culture. As befitting such an exercise, Saladin marries the aristocratic Pamela (comically attracted to him for the obverse reason of backing up her socialist leanings), works as a voice-actor able to pass himself off as white, and dresses as a caricature Englishman. Despite working on a television production called *The Aliens Show,* Saladin's assimilation to Englishness appears relatively stable. However, after a brief visit to Bombay the caricature begins to crack. Most distressingly for Chamcha (and comically for us), his control of language slips when woken on the soon-to-explode plane:

> At this point an air stewardess bent over the sleeping Chamcha and demanded, with the pitiless hospitality of her tribe: *Something to drink, sir? A drink?*, and Saladin, emerging from the dream, found his speech unaccountably metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade. 'Achha, means what?' he mumbled. 'Alcoholic beverage or what?' And, when the stewardess reassured him, whatever you wish, sir, all beverages are gratis, he heard, once again, his traitor voice: 'So, okay, bibi, give one whiskysoda only.' What a nasty surprise! He had come awake with a jolt, and sat stiffly in his chair, ignoring alcohol and peanuts. How had the past bubbled up, in transmogrified vowels and vocab? What next? Would he take to putting coconut-oil in his hair? Would he take to squeezing his nostrils between thumb and forefinger, blowing noisily and drawing forth a glutinous silver arc of muck?...He should have known it was

> a mistake to *go home,* after so long, how could it be anything other than a regression...*I'm not myself*...masks beneath masks until suddenly the bare bloodless skull. [34]

This example demonstrates Rushdie's ability to laugh at his most serious concerns, expressing, as it does, the comic tone of everyday dialogue, slowly replaced by a more serious derivation. The humorous play on cultural stereotypes of language and behaviour turns into a more abstract observation of identity and role-playing. The dream that precedes this quotation is also symbolically relevant: an image of a suffocating glass-encased figure whose flesh begins to disintegrate when the surface is fractured.

All too soon, the cracks in the assumed mask of Englishness also eat away at Saladin's "real" body, to be drastically replaced by fantasy elements. Falling from the sky, Saladin and his companion are saved by the seemingly miraculous intervention of magic. Gibreel's furious arm-flapping and singing is fabulously empowered by the divine intervention of the narrator: "'Fly,' Chamcha shrieked at Gibreel. 'Start flying, now.' And added, without knowing its source, the second command; 'And sing.'...Is birth always a fall? Do angels have wings? Can men fly?" (8). Rushdie's answer confers flight on the men, "pitting levity against gravity" in a physical metaphor which matches his metaphysical, quasi-religious project. As Brennan notes, attempts at levitation feature abundantly in this novel of "serious intent", but I suggest that more attention to the "ground beneath his feet" may have stood Rushdie in better stead (Brennan 151).

I argue that the places where his attention is more "grounded" display a more potent and effective portrayal of migrant issues. Edward Said suggests that Rushdie is commonly revered as a "champion of immigrants' rights and a severe critic of nostalgic imperialism" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 308), and Rushdie certainly

seems to make no bones in his "fabulous" criticism of the racist attitudes of both the police and the higher political order of Thatcherite Britain. However much Saladin may "repudiate" the magical elements of the text, once started they nonetheless take hold of his identity, metamorphosing it into the bawdy vision of bestiality, viewed through the eyes of racist stereotyping police:

> Saladin broke down for the second time that night: this time, however, he began to giggle hysterically, infected, perhaps, by the continuing hilarity of his captors. The three immigration officers were in particularly high spirits, and it was one of these... who had 'debagged' Saladin with a merry cry of, 'Opening time, Packy; let's see what you're made of!' Red-and-white stripes were dragged off the protesting Chamcha, who was reclining on the floor of the van with two stout policemen holding each arm and a fifth constable's boot placed firmly upon his chest, and whose protests went unheard in the general mirthful din.... His thighs had grown uncommonly wide and powerful, as well as hairy. Below the knee the hairiness came to a halt, and his legs narrowed into tough, bony, almost fleshless calves, terminating in a pair of shiny, cloven hoofs, such as one might find on any billy-goat. Saladin was also taken aback by the sight of his phallus, greatly enlarged and embarrassingly erect... 'Animal,' Stein cursed him as he administered a series of kicks, and Bruno joined in: 'You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilised standards, eh?' [157-9]

While the ribald depiction of the large erect phallus on Saladin is symbolic of archetype cross-race rape mythos fostered in much of the neo-imperial texts of the eighties, the scene also magically substantiates one of the visions "alien-ness" (the symbolism of the sub-civilised animal) imposed on immigrant cultures and enforced by an often-brutal police force.

This sense of being a portion of the population surplus to requirements exists despite the historically offered invitation to the "colonies" to settle in Britain by

Harold Macmillan. Chamcha has become an "animal" in the eyes of Britain, despite his adoption of its values as his own. In an era when "Victorian values" were being valorised, and "multiculturalism" was the latest term paradoxically bandied about for suppression of difference, Rushdie has plenty of material for satire and ironic revision (*Imaginary Homelands* 122). For example, within this cultural vein of black humour, the Hot Wax nightclub symbolically burns the effigy of the Prime Minister, flashy immigrant dub-culture pitted against inflammatory political denigration, even as migrants are officially housed in slum firetraps and the police are portrayed torching community activists. Part of this narrative reversal is spoken through the voice of Jumpy Joshi, immigrant, poet and gym instructor, who ironically reverses Enoch Powell's racist vision of a "river of blood" into a positive expression of immigrant identity (186).

I also suggest that this inversion of the act of naming applies to Rushdie himself, situated as a migrant activist. The presence of the Rushdie, the author, is noticeable in several self-parodies. The figure of Chamcha resonates with similarities: a history of English education, occupation as a jingle artist, marriage to an English woman and the "divided self" between the cultures of Bombay and London are all paralleled. It is also felt in his comic presence as Salman the Persian, in Gibreel's dream. The fictional Salman is discovered in the game of distorting the words of the Prophet as he acts as scribe. In a lasting irony, "Comic devices, serious ends" could almost act as an epitaph for a writer whose jokes have recoiled onto himself. In the book, the namesake for the author is judged: "Your blasphemy, Salman, can't be forgiven... to set your words against the Word of God" (374). This statement seems to summon up

the Ayatollah's edict, the Valentine's Day hate mail (Pipes 87). It is a cruel joke when an author's self-parody can turn into a fatally serious fact (Ruthven 11-2).[45]

Most famously, though, *The Satanic Verses* functions as a kind of religious satire, playing with a secular revision of Islam that has not migrated very well. This feature of the novel must be perceived to be at once its most and least successful aspect. Rushdie's blatant (and subtle) criticisms of Islamic self-representation, and particular figures within the contemporary Moslem world, were spectacularly successful in provoking an even more blatant reaction. However, the subtleties of reaction overshadowed by the *fatwa* suggest that the other "messages" of the novel are lost to many, including many of the Moslem immigrants in Britain who would appear to be the closest Rushdie has to a "natural" constituency (Brennan 145), whereas the medley of (doubtless worthy) literary and political defenders to Rushdie's "freedom of expression" also emphasizes the distance Rushdie maintains between himself and the subject of his derision. The playful, if dangerous satirical game that Rushdie plays, hides the very real impact of the novel, in a width of dissemination beyond actual readership, hides the shift from a "politics of constituency" to a "politics of offence" deliberate in its scope (Mufti 54)

As Griffin suggests, satire often functions as a derision of higher literary forms (134). In this case, it appears to many that Rushdie is mimicking the Islamic religious narratives, including the holy book itself, the Quran, on an elevated level, in terms of Western literary tradition. Western readers of the novel, the assumed audience, may read the book with little recognition of what makes it "blasphemous", but recognize the reaction of Moslems to it as a confirmation of some of the inflexible Islamic traits displayed in the novel. However, the figurative action surrounding Gibreel Farishta

[45] Ruthven also points to the irony of Rushdie being protected by those he satirises: the police and Tory government.

seems to have a significance that is religiously subversive (Sardar and Davies 143). His name, coupling him with the Archangel Gabriel, displays the thematic direction that Rushdie takes with his character. Nominally he is a movie star specialising in "theologicals", playing God across the religious boundaries of his native subcontinent (16). Gibreel has a "face inextricably mixed up with holiness, perfection, grace: God stuff" - despite a common, "profane" background, and a bad case of halitosis (17). This is perhaps Rushdie having a small chuckle, a minimal irreverent play on body humour. But then Gibreel gets delusions of grandeur, or more plainly, just delusions, raising the stakes of comical effect (and reaction) somewhat. Following a mysterious physical illness, Gibreel is seemingly afflicted with a mental illness.

Couched behind the delusional dreams of this figure Rushdie seems to be taking pot-shots at Islamic fundamentalists: from gentle images of apostasy (gorging on pork), to the more serious equivocation of the origins of the Quran and depictions of a monstrous, revolutionary Imam. The more inflammatory sequences seemingly feature a version of the Prophet's life, but one with some important differences. Throughout this subplot, Rushdie plays with the idea of religious equivocality. A brothel containing whore-versions of his wives mirrors the Prophet's harem (380), the medieval "demonised" name "Mahound" is perversely chosen for the Prophet (93), and the figures of God and Shaitan confused (12). Rushdie even personifies God, through Gibreel's eyes, in a diminutive guise, as a middle-aged, stout, "balding [man who]...seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses" (318). One of the other more amusing dream episodes is equally deflating of religion. This fatal pilgrimage tale, telling of a cult following who attempt to cross the impeding stretch of water between India and Mecca on foot, is all the more poignantly ironic for having a "real" precedent. After the devastating event, just as Rushdie portrays, the survivors of the

mass drowning were faced with the possibility of being charged with "attempted illegal immigration" (504).

Although Rushdie conveniently terms Gibreel's irreverent visions as fictions, symptoms of madness, they must also reflect on the business of faith, and the questions of how faith translates or migrates between cultures (Rushdie, Imaginary *Homelands* 393-4). These deviant visions, Rushdie claims, are aimed as an attack on the "handful of extremists [who] are defining Islam" (Brennan 146). Just as Said attacks the Western media for unfair, stereotypical coverage of Islam, Rushdie also perceives an attempted narrowing of the field of reference from within. However, any artistic work that challenges the orthodoxy of a religion from within is politically vulnerable to a charge of "apostasy", "heresy" or "blasphemy" (Jain 39).[46] As Homi Bhabha sees it, "far from simply misinterpreting the Koran, Rushdie's sin lies in opening up a space of discursive contestation that places the authority of the Koran within a perspective of historical and cultural relativism" (226). Although Islam tolerates some forms of theological debate, the irreverent discussion within a putatively low-culture, characteristically secular context, and the act of comparison with unholy texts, understandably infuriates Muslim clerics. Similarly, in placing the action of the Quran into the hybridised setting of a modern "theological", Rushdie "blasphemes" in the "slippage in-between the intended moral framework and the displacement into the dark, symptomatic figurations of the 'dreamwork' of cinematic fantasy" (Bhabha 226). In the novel, the equivocal narrative voice is able to address these issues of new, hybrid forms that challenge older structures of meaning:

> How does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjurings is it made? How does it survive, extreme and dangerous as it is? What

[46] Despite elsewhere declaiming his role as apostate, here he concedes that the "Islamic religion is what I know most about."

> compromises, what deals, what betrayals of its secret nature must it make to stave off the wrecking crew, the exterminating angel, the guillotine? (8)

In Gibreel's comic destruction of those around him, and finally, ironically himself, Rushdie may be suggesting that "the devil made him do it" even if the devil is merely a construction of Gibreel's dementia.

The apparent contradictions of *The Satanic Verses* being both the most serious and comic of Rushdie's books are contained in this order of migrant "in-between-ness". In his mastery of a serio-comic genre he reveals them as complementary facets of his art. The level of entertainment gained from the book is dependent on the interpretation of the work as an act of subversion, which goes some way towards warding off the co-opting semblance of the commercial and popular success of its author. Through the use of comic devices such as burlesque, irony, satire and parody, Rushdie effectively raises important issues of culture, religion, and politics.

However, the controversy surrounding the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, and particularly the charges of "blasphemy", precisely prove the power of comic derision in literature and problems with predicting reactions when writing on the move.[47] In the apparent border-crossings of his work, Rushdie fixates on transmigration between different cultures. This is embodied most concretely in immigrant visions of London and, more generally, abroad, against a fantastically remembered, chaotic but fertile Bombay. Yet despite Rushdie's engagement with personal experience as a source, and articulation of a version of globalised, schismatic narrative that plays out its apparent contradictions as potential strengths, the super-abundance of dislocating features in his narrative tend to leave Rushdie vulnerable to criticism. Just like the figure of Chatwin that I analysed in my second chapter, Rushdie's nomadic roaming of subject

matter illuminates it, but it also produced for a reading act of consumption in such a way as to leech away much of the located force behind a migrant subjectivity. His assumption of a taste common to a secular, bourgeois and westernised audience may suggest an expansion of these social categories' acceptance of subject matter. However, the production of his "migrant aesthetics" must also prove palatable for this audience, and consequently unpalatable for other reader-subjects in other locations. In placing himself personally within the scope of the *Satanic Verses* affair, and in the easy association between Salman the historically treacherous scribe and his own modern-day practice, Rushdie displaced his serious issues from the concern of many Islamic "readers" around the world (Mufti 57). Hence his universalising tendency is likely to continue alienating a large proportion of those subjects on which he bases his praxis.

Ondaatje in Another Skin: "Voicing" Marginal, Multiple and Migrant Histories.

Contrasting with this tendency in Rushdie to emphasize the free-wheeling nature of migrant status, I perceive Ondaatje's position as more substantially "placed" within the multiple articulations of migration, more effectively "voicing" divergent migrant histories due to a greater detailing of contextual construction and personal embeddedness in his texts.

Michael Ondaatje's second epigraph to *In the Skin of a Lion* is a quotation from John Berger's *G*, seemingly influential upon "postcolonial" writers.[48] Berger states, "Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one" (*G* 133). Reflecting this, Ondaatje's novel serves as a forum for the "real" histories of migrant

[47] Rushdie does have an ability to pick controversial subjects that blow up in his face. Hence a more recent book, *Rage*, dealing with sectarian fury in a New York setting, was launched immediately before the World Trade Centre attack of September 11, 2001.
[48] Roy also uses this as an epigraph in *The God of Small Things.*

workers largely ignored in the official constructions of Canada's twentieth-century historical conception of "nationhood". Ondaatje's nationhood is developed as a counter to the dominant mythologizing function of a nation-building narrative, which acts to authenticate "natural" class and cultural divisions, validate iconic institutions, and support the unified infrastructure of capitalism and parochial politics. Instead, the author's use of "history, class commentary, political analysis, subverted realist narrative, and metafictive self-reflexivity", destabilises the political act of packaging the past as a stable commodity (Hutcheon, "Ex-centric" 133; Barbour 179). In this endeavour real documents are quoted and the real histories of the marginalized "voiced," but these "real" sources, photographs and documents are quoted in fictionally altered forms or contexts.

While the choice of fictional register alongside documentary features may seem to render problematic the notions of historical truth, Ondaatje's revival of this "human element" within the process of nation building echoes the tradition of nationalist historical fiction (*In the Skin of a Lion* 146). Less familiar, though, is his refusal to remain within the boundaries of what Georg Lukács sees as the common portrayal of history in fiction, through "social-critical realism" (Lukács 100). Ondaatje's dispersal of historic discourse within various symbolic registers leads to an ambiguity of significance, and an aesthetic approach that is fitting for the "shifty" subject of the migrant. As Linda Hutcheon asks, is it "biography? fiction? poetry?"("Canadian Postmodern" 20). Her own term, "historiographic metafiction", is an apt answer to Ondaatje's unresolved postmodern amalgamation, a combination of layers of fiction and implied historical reference in an uneasy co-existence (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 203). *In the Skin of a Lion* uses fictional oral retellings, pictorial art, photography, theatrical and cinematic registers in conjunction with newspaper headlines, the legacy

of building and "official" documentation, creating a juxtaposed montage of literary sites and of possible past locations. Within this framework, Ondaatje is able to locate his characters in a "mongrel" history of migrant consciousness, a construction that challenges readers' assumptions about historical legitimacy, "nationhood", and the place of fictional representation in celebrating cultural difference (*In the Skin of a Lion* 238).

Ondaatje's construction of Canadian history is managed by a representation of several different levels of nation building that his migrant text is able to access. However, these layers are not fused into a unitary metanarrative of "nationhood" espoused by many other writers, critics, historians and politicians. As a legacy of the British imperial discourse, the "filial" tradition of connecting an Anglophile literary nationalism to acts of political annexation continues to predicate the central, "familial" link of Canada to its "fatherland" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 7).[49] This is evident when historians like A. B. McKillop can still talk of Canada's place in the "greater cultural context" of imperial subjection, and the continuing nationalist stances influenced by such racial purists as A. R. M. Lower (who argued against the "thinning" of the Canadian "stock" by immigration from different cultures [Heble 238, 245-6]). The explicitly politicised content of *In the Skin of a Lion* actively defines itself against this assumption of "Canada as a homogenous, racially and ethnically pure, nation [expressing] a *natural,* filiative relation between parent (in this case the father) and offspring" (Heble 246). Ondaatje shares a distrust of race and language as national parameters with Ernst Renan, who states that "[s]uch exaggerations enclose one within a specific culture... one limits oneself, one hems oneself in. One leaves the heady air that one breathes in the vast field of humanity in

[49] Said uses the example of Spenser's nationalist literature, his own, personal stake in the conquest of Ireland and the continuing relationship between the two countries.

order to enclose oneself in a conventicle with one's compatriots" (qtd. in Apter 17). Instead of the "one", Ondaatje's version of the "nation" is pluralist, and is complicated by an historical practice rife with the ambiguities that are part of a postmodern discourse. His version of Canada has a "history [that defines] itself against centres" (Hutcheon, "The Canadian Postmodern" 4). In this attention, Ondaatje continues to be influenced by the work of John Berger. As in the case of Said, the work of Berger and Mohr is easily detected as a respected favourite and model (Solecki, "An Interview" 328).[50] This respect is especially apparent in the influence of their collaborative study, *A Seventh Man*, which is a "book of images and words about the experience of Migrant Workers in Europe," designed to draw attention to the "nightmare" of those displaced by economic history (Berger and Mohr 3,7). Ondaatje's book works from a model that shares this attention, drawing on cartography, physical production and assembly, social formation based on migration and linguistic and cultural "affiliation", and the symbolic register of narrative itself, in his rendering of a period of "Canadian history" fraught with ambiguities.

Reflecting this depiction of historical ambiguity, Ondaatje's realisation of economic forces and migration is both critical and celebratory in a manner that also competes with Atwood's model of the national trope, which she discusses in *Survival.* Although Atwood elsewhere expounds the notion that, "We are all immigrants to this place" (and apparently conveniently forgetting First Nation peoples), Huggan makes the point that the differences within Canada's settler culture are partially glossed over ("Exoticism and Ethnicity" 116). Certainly, Atwood's trope of "survivalism", with her analysis of a Canadian, "national" literature that is primarily interested in the trope of the harsh environment that opposes human settlement, acknowledges a

[50] Ondaatje states that he will "read anything by John Berger."

homogeneous national character. "Survival" is the mythical reverse of the "fatal impact" concept, whereby it is the Westerners who are susceptible to death and destruction; her depiction of Canadians suggests "national" characteristics (in literature) of isolation and fatal individualism that suppresses social complexity and diversity.

Ondaatje's version of rural conflict is somewhat different in emphasis. I argue that he perceives the limited "human order" mostly in evidence in Canadian wilderness literature, as part of an order of production. This order of production is also represented by a class of labour that may have an impact on the environment without adequate historical representation: a situation that Ondaatje seeks to redress. Wilderness activities of farming, logging, trapping, milling and mining all change the physical characteristics of a landscape, and yet metro-centric history largely consumes the products in industry without commentary. Ondaatje seems to echo the work of critics such as Foucault and Jameson, who see the centralising and hierarchical tendencies of political and economic power as the authorising features in the creation of the "dominant discourse" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 96-9; Jameson, "Postmodernism" 267-75). As a consequence, the men and women who labour in this peripheral zone of production are swallowed up by a created, capitalist environment, and even the limited local, rural account, does not register the existence of a largely migrant work force. In the novel, Patrick may note "thirty loggers, wrapped up dark", but "[n]o one in the town of Bellrock really knows where the men have come from. It takes someone else, much later, to tell the boy that" (7-8). These men work and die in silence, taking their personal histories with them. It is only by the seemingly inarticulate marks of their home-made skates and the burning cattails with which they

light their winter-night escapades that Patrick the man is able to partially reverse the "disappearance of these men" (8).

Economics and politics can also play a vital role in "real" as well as metaphorical death of rural migrants. Hazen is doomed indirectly by a company's greed, mining "too deep" for the cheap commodity of feldspar (74), and Cato's threat of instigating a loggers' strike is headed off by means of his execution by the bosses' lackeys (155). The "wilderness" is shown by Ondaatje to have been traditionally represented by the history of acquisition as opposed to any account of "humanity", an alienation of labourers that he seeks to reverse. However, those migrants who are more directly involved in metropolitan production are also in similar need of rescuing from the margins of history.

Metropolitan Dreams.

The chaos apparent in the construction of the city and its inhabitants matches the violence of the rural landscape's representation as a palimpsest. The urban site, as a nexus of ideology and political discourse, is a particularly crowded environment in *In The Skin of a Lion*, especially by migrant communities. Ondaatje makes several comparisons between the ideologies of planning and the practices of building in conjunction with his literary "architecture" (Solecki, "Interview" 322-4). Ondaatje's urban vision seems an act of postmodern confusion, representative of the "schizophrenic disjunction" of the cityscape (Bhabha *214*-5; Jameson, "Postmodernism" 267-75).

Integral to this is Patrick's position as a migrant in the city, which reflects the dialogue between the economic dictation of urban realities and the desire for an egalitarian ideal "metropolis". Both Henri Lefebvre and Berger see this migration

from the country to the city as an historical reflection of capitalism shifting its industries (Lefebvre 65-85; Berger and Mohr 107-8). The physical migration of industry is accompanied by an ambivalent attitude to the role of this dislocated pool of labour: both welcoming and yet stigmatising a large proportion of the population. Berger uses the example of England, the "first industrial power to have large scale recourse to migrant labour from another country", noting how:

> hundreds of thousands of Irish peasants, their agriculture destroyed by English land policies, their families dispersed and decimated by starvation, crossed the sea to Liverpool and Glasgow. In their new situation they were without a trade. They had to accept low wages. They were mobile. They were disorganised. They were seen by the English working class as inferiors, and were accused by them of cutting wages. They lived in the worst slums, which became Irish ghettos. They worked as navvies, dockers, steel-workers, and they were indispensable to the building of the physical installations necessary for the expansion of British industry. (Berger and Mohr 108).

Urban "planning", as a tool of capitalism, can be seen to require such a pool of labour and yet to deny the needs of this group. Denigration and quiet exploitation reveal the notion of a truly egalitarian "nature" of the city as a fallacy; instead, structures of oppression are built into the very "urban fabric" (Lefebvre 65-85). In this way, Ondaatje's portrayal of the physical construction of Toronto, with its attendant dangers that the labourers involved face, is paralleled by the construction of the official, municipal narrative. The official city is a kind of self-censoring text, engaged in the repression and exclusion from the social register those workers it depends on for its creation. The particular material facts of public construction may be available for easy public access, yet the hazards of these projects are not as easy to come by. Ondaatje recalls the archives' excessive recording of detail in these civic operations, down to a specific inventory of materials used, yet of the act of work and the very

workers themselves, there is no trace: "'I can tell you exactly how many buckets of sand were used, because this is Toronto history, but the people who actually built the goddamn bridge were unspoken of. There're unhistorical!'" (qtd. in Barbour 179). This sentiment finds its way into one of the tensest exchanges in the novel. When Patrick confronts Commissioner Harris near the end of the book, Harris glorifies the construction of "his" water-filtration plant, yet it is a monologue that denies the history of its construction:

> - You watch, in fifty years they're going to come here and gape at the herringbone and the copper roofs. We need excess, something to live up to. I fought tooth and nail for that herringbone.
>
> [Patrick replies] – *You* fought. *You* fought. Think about those who built the intake tunnels. Do you know how many of us died in there?
>
> - There was no record kept. (236)

This exchange demonstrates the space in the construction of the urban vision that has been largely ignored by the official records. Workers have literally put their bodies on the line in these projects, and yet it is excepted knowledge, these edifices simply standing for themselves, or branded with the names of the rich and famous.

Town planning is just one of the symbolic areas in the novel wherein the historical domination of the privileged classes is critically examined. Ondaatje's vision of the symptomatic "details" of economic exploitation should alert the reader that the author is not ideologically neutral himself. Even when there is an apparent level of humanisation in the class-conflict portrayed, on both sides, this is tempered by violent images. I suggest that even in Ondaatje's construction of Commissioner Harris, the author demonstrates the implicit violence within a character of apparent ambivalence. In Harris' position as a "boss," the commissioner is often explicit in his callous disregard at the human cost of his projects and the comparative economic

inequity displayed in his clothes ("his expensive tweed coat that cost more than the combined weeks' salaries of five bridge workers" [43]), represents an ideological and economical exploitation of workers. Yet, later in the novel, he is given a degree of sympathy and understanding that undermines his role as a "class-enemy", showing sensitivity to Patrick's predicament as Harris defuses an act of potential sabotage (242). Harris' application of city planning as politico-economic "doctrine" is at odds with his naive translation of it into an oneiric creation, a communal "oeuvre" in Lefebvre's terminology (97-9). These contradictions are combined with a level of tolerance and education that seem to allow the planner to recognise Patrick's heroic status and to spare him. However, this is a limited reprieve for the capitalist class that he represents. He has "worked up" from a lower social position (235), but on the way he has lost his class identity and assumed a similar level of cruelty to that of Ambrose Small, the self-made millionaire and hooligan. In this, he shares qualities with Ondaatje's other depicted "rich" characters, revealed in scenes of cruelty and ignorance (like the champagne-cork target practice, aimed at chained monkeys [221]), equating the rich with gangsters. When Caravaggio says, "let me tell you about the rich - they have a way of laughing" (223), he describes a cruel laughter in the faces of the workforce that maintain their position, and the attempted imposition of a type of collective aphasia in the social register.

The City as Mural.

This attempted suppression of the immigrant workers' "voice" and subsequent social abstraction from the historical register, is one which Ondaatje problematically reverses, finding gaps in the official construction of documentation and using imaginative techniques to fill in the spaces. At times, he is able to build on existing, if

marginalised documentation, although the result is usually a metafictive creation. Ondaatje, like Berger, is engaged in the politics of building a significant place in history for these "workers and lovers" out of the materials at hand. Fittingly, the act of physical construction of the cityscape provides Ondaatje with a background against which to portray the lives of his historically marginalized migrants. The function of various public structures is demonstrably subverted to the purpose of communal "oeuvres"; the library, the train station and, especially, the waterworks are transformed into secular cathedrals by means of performative acts of communal imagination. Art becomes the voice for this underclass, acting, like the funeral music during an eclipse, as "a lifeline from one moment of light to another" (159).

The powerful and public display of the mural is an artistic choice which Ondaatje particularly claims for this function. The ambiguous nature of such a choice of medium is signposted even before we have a chance to open the novel's cover. The picture displayed on the front of the Picador edition seems typical of Ondaatje's conglomeration of historical documentation, epic social statement, and artistic liminality. At first sight, the posture of the two work-clad figures could be interpreted in a number of ways. The relationship of support between the two seems to reflect the stance of a dance or embrace, an embrace that the novel's back cover acknowledgment resolves into a depiction of the labour of "hull riveting". The apparently ambiguous relationship between the image and the action allows an element of romance to insert itself into this pictorial narrative. The act of labour here assumes an heroic status and a bond between the labourers that is politically symbolic (Overbye 2).

Similarly, the artistic style of the picture is revealingly internationalist or "migratory" in its connection with the politically symbolic. The legacy of "Social

Realism" is present in the picture: the style most closely associated with Soviet artists and those influenced by their work and political agenda, for example in the revolutionary work of Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera. This "school" of political art emphasised the heroic location of work and revolution in a socialist vision, with the accompanying valorisation of the proletariat: a tradition that continued into Soviet literature, visual and sculptural arts, and particularly into the new, "revolutionary" medium of cinema (Giannetti 243). Soviet cinema may have been divided in "style" between the conservative methods of Socialist Realism, the experimental historical reconstructions of Sergei Eisenstein, and the documentary "Constructivism" of Dziga Vertov, yet it was still united in its valorising of the proletarian subject. The "Constructivism" of Vertov, displayed most famously in *The Man with the Movie Camera,* particularly connects the mechanical feature of (silent) filming to the ideological project of constructing a proletarian "voice" through showcasing the "poetry of the everyday" and the process of capturing it (Giannetti 244). In this way, Vertov's connection to the mural form can be maintained both by its similar subject matter but also by the aesthetic eye that films and edits. Vertov's aesthetic positions the technique of capture, the activity of art, into the picture as part of the subject matter. Hence the art and artist's emphasized incorporation as an historical part of the social scene as well as the "picture", where the artistic act of constructivism is not merely representative but also engendering of social movement and innovation (Petric 8). Such projects perform an ideological and, more specifically, mythological action, relying on the act of an associatively imaginative interpretation based in knowledge of history and politics.

In the Skin of a Lion operates within this ideologically informed aesthetic tradition, displaying just such an aesthetically imaginative construction of history.

Ondaatje describes his own work of portraying workers and lovers in terms of mural, and in the scenes that are presented as murals, ideological symbolism is immediately apparent. Patrick's growing awareness of his place within the culture of community is also realised in his vision of himself fitting into this type of visual, artistic editing:

> gazing at so many stories... he saw the interactions, saw how each one of them was carried by the strength of something more than themselves....His own life was no longer a single story but a part of a *mural*, which was a falling together of accomplices. Patrick saw a wondrous night web – all of these fragments of a human order, something ungoverned by the family he was born into or the headlines of the day. A nun on a bridge, a daredevil who was unable to sleep without drink, a boy watching a fire from his bed at night, an actress who ran away with a millionaire – the detritus and chaos of the age was realigned. (144-5, italics added)

All of these elements of the "mural" are ideologically represented as having a "human order". The apparent order here is that of an arrangement that unbalances conventional narrative. The juxtaposition of stories functions to create comparative, "third" meanings, similar to that produced in the editorial fashioning of Vertov and Eisenstein: the meanings constructed in the "in between," and eccentric to the dominant messages of society (Barthes, *Image,* 52-68).

Hence, such a strategic artistic construction is fit for a migrant subject. This vision of a mural acts positively as a device for placing Patrick within a "realigned" history, with a sense of community not dependent on filial ties or the record of "headlines" (Heble 239). Patrick's sense of belonging, in both locality and history, is dependent on this muralist association of his own fragmentary story with those narrative shards representing lives adjacent to himself. However, Ondaatje does not always use the mural as such a positive device. The heroism implicit in references to the Epic of Gilgamesh creates a mythically symbolic word-mural of solitary suffering

and the potential for self-defeating violent acts. Examples of this negative side of the "mural" are the anarchistic destruction of Alice, and Patrick's potential suicide attack on the waterworks. The power of mural to claim what it is painted on is also not always achieved, as when the marble, copper and herringbone tiles fail to absorb the imprint of the hands that worked them (236).

When an alternative mode of representation is required, it is the "map" of the body that Ondaatje often illustrates as a substitute register for the marginalized narratives of migrant labour and life. Through his depiction of the body, Ondaatje is able to find place that embodies the violent potential of these people's history from both real and imagined sources. For example, the work of Nicholas Temelcoff is noted by his superiors as special, "so exceptional and time-saving he earns one dollar an hour while the other bridge workers receive forty cents" (35). This is, however, simply an economic recognition of particularly dangerous tasks and corporeal skill, and it does not justify any official record or claim to the bridge he builds (although the workers "officiate" their own illegitimate "opening ceremony" (27)). Temelcoff's presence is noted as a mere "burned speck" in the archives of construction (34). The reclamation of this worker's history is an example of Ondaatje's method of juxtaposition and substitution, reclaiming a "body of work". Temelcoff has had his life "preserved" through the records of the social historian Lillian Petroff (Duffy 134).

However, in the novel it is the fictitious dialogues with Alice and Patrick that free up the stories of this man, from the prison-storehouse of his body. In this figurative unlocking of his tongue, the narrative of his trade resculpts his body, evident in "about twenty scars... 'under my chin, that also broke my jaw. Coiling wire did that...' Hot tar burns on his arm. Nails in his calves" (37). Similar corporeal illustrations are present throughout the text, enlarging the mural into a migrant, group scene. The

mythical symbolism of "Patrick's gift, that arrow into the past," unlocks the language locked in his body, "show[ing] him the wealth in himself, how he has been sewn into history," beyond his awareness of a working present (149). Likewise, the self-painting of his two lovers reveal a symbolic human order of relationships that challenges Patrick's former trick of palmanism: shifting his sense of "place" from body-blindness into a more visually significant awareness.

The tableau of painted tannery workers also functions as a wonderful metaphor for the potentially negative political register of "social realism" via the "body politic". The dyes mark the bodies of the labourers who "[leap] into different colours as if into different countries" (130). These "representatives from separate nations" may be visually striking, yet theirs is an image at odds with its significance:

> If he were an artist [Patrick] would have painted them but that was false celebration. What did it mean in the end to look aesthetically plumaged on this October day...? What would the painting tell? That they were twenty to thirty-five years old, were Macedonians mostly, though there were a few Poles and Lithuanians. That on average they had three or four sentences of English, that they had never read the *Mail and Empire* or *Saturday Night*...That they would die of consumption and at the present they did not know it...They were the dyers. They were paid one dollar a day. Nobody could last in that job more than six months and only the desperate took it. (130-1)

Implicit in this narrative are the differentiation of the labourers by their ethnic origins, and the exploitation of those countries figuratively in the dangerous fringe of jobs that produce "Canada". The mark of the dye is a disfigurement, a symbol of difference within a society that encourages "purity" (Duffy, 134). Even when the idea of assimilation is raised, through the brilliant escape of Caravaggio, artist-thief, from prison by literally painting himself out of the picture, this is a demonstrably a brief,

dissembling tactic, and he remains differentiated as a positively impure transgressor of margins.

Impure Tongues.

I argue that historic "purity", and its associated policies of racist filiation, faces one of the most sustained challenges within *In the Skin of a Lion.* A challenge expressed by the order of narration (Heble 245-7). This is a loose "human, order", and one that does not assert the dominance of a single perspective, demonstrating a political act of "incredulity toward metanarratives", or at least disperses the metanarrative of *resistance* into the mouths of many (Lyotard). The imaginative act of "telling" may retrieve an alternate discourse to challenge history. The circularity and adaptive nature of this "oral" register challenges the concept of a singular, linear historical progression, in a similar manner to the way in which *Running in the Family* fragments its subject. At the beginning of the tale readers are informed of the apparent situation of oral discourse at work. The passage "places" the context of the narrative, indicating a retroactive ordering of the speech act of storytelling, describing a shifting loop of a tale connecting the beginning and end, yet the narration is not neatly matched up. Telling details change, and reflecting this, the narrative control is shattered throughout the novel by the relay of narrators. Yet despite this apparent lack of narrative "unification", the shared nature of the novel's discourse is a feature that presents a particular, communal perspective that also subverts the "national" vision of history.

The coined phrase "E pluribus unum", asserts the notion of "from many into one". While this is an ethos of a different sort of American dream founded on the myth of the unifying power of money, it also may seem to be an apt expression of the

narrative sequence of the book. Various characters assume the mantle of storyteller, like the passing of skins in Alice's play, when "each person had their moment when they assumed the skins of wild animals, when they took responsibility for the story" (157). This sequential variation of voices from different backgrounds does appear to build up a collective vision. Yet the book does not represent a "melting pot", or homogeneous text. Instead, Canada is represented as a "multicultural mosaic" (Hutcheon, "The Canadian Postmodern" 20). Ondaatje, in keeping with a notion of a culturally diverse nation, creates a heterogeneous narrative of history. The voices of Patrick, Alice, Clara, Ambrose, Cato, Nicholas, Caravaggio, and Harris are all realised by means of the relating of "personal" accounts, and the only available resolution for their disparate acts is one of associative and comparative reading. In addition, even though these are the more prominent characters within the book, they cannot be said to dominate the text.

Alongside their vocal diversity there are other voices that demand attention. Intertextual voices, from the historical, mythical and artistic realm, are inserted into the text at intervals and also swell the postmodern mêlée of "characters" within the book. For example, the inclusion of the poet Anne Wilkinson, author of *Lions in the Way*, and the mythical reference to epic of Gilgamesh apparent in the title, the first epigraph, and further quotations within the text (including that of Harris), seem to have a dialogue at odds with the central voices (Duffy, 132-6). Even the authorial presence must be noted in passages that float into a third person narrative insight without identifying whose voice we are privy to. Hence, passages such as the death of Ambrose Small contain insights beyond the ability of Patrick, or any other surviving narrators, to faithfully portray (213-5). All of these "voices" are, of course, retrospective, and mediated through a distancing register even when they are at their

most revealing. In this way they are all "historical", indicating both a separation of time and narration in the vocalisation of events, represented, however, in a dispersal of histories at the same time as seeking to link them into a "single" narrative.

Implicit within this dispersal of narrative fragments, is Ondaatje's creation of a postmodern conundrum where the "mythology" of nationhood is challenged. Homi Bhabha's recognition of the postmodern "transnational dimension of cultural transformation – migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation" challenges the notion of a "unifying discourse of 'nation', [and] 'peoples'" with an increasing awareness "of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition" (172). Ondaatje illustrates this analysis in *In the Skin of a Lion* when he creates a community of alien voices, all connected in their unassimilated relation to the Canadian "norm". Alongside the foreign immigrant voices of the text, whether Macedonian, Italian, Bulgarian, Greek or Finn, there are other "alien" voices from within Canada. As we have seen, it is possible to be an immigrant from the Wilderness (or to emigrate to it, as Ambrose Small's flight shows). As Berger notes in *A Seventh Man*, in the act of migration the labourer faces a different kind of labour: "He passed and was born" (Berger and Mohr 58). Patrick's arrival in the Toronto ghetto highlights the "space between him and the community." It is "he [who] is the one born in this country who [yet] knows nothing of the place" (156-7). Shifting between worlds has the effect of a rebirth: requiring the relearning of basic skills, knowledge and histories in order to survive in the new environment.

Similarly, language is shown to be just as powerful a division as it is a device of communication within the migrant "community". Patrick is an outsider in the largely Eastern European part of Toronto, tellingly accepted only when he makes the first step towards articulating a foreign language. His assimilation into the community is

part of a symbolic and cultural acceptance of shared difference, an assumption of "wander[ing] through the wilderness in the skin of a lion" (vii). In contrast to this acceptance, figures of Anglophone authority can be seen to deny the voice of immigrants even when it attempts to dress itself in the borrowed tongue. Duffy describes a social environment where the imperfect English of a guard invalidates his authority over Anglophone trespassers (Duffy 126-7).

Some of the more ironic scenes of the book deal with such transactions of linguistic placement: cultural "translations" that emphasise the ideological component of history. Immigrants' speech acts display a complexity of impulses. Firstly it is language itself, contained in the tales of those returning from the New World, the "judas goats to the west", that paves the way for further immigration (44). Fabulous tales, such as Daniel Stoyanoff's macabre story of miraculous compensation for a lost arm, despite the obvious elements of sacrifice, create a "spell of language" that entices others on "a great journey made in silence" (43). The act of travel is one taken with bated breath, partly in excited anticipation, and partly through loss of the agency of speech. When Temelcoff arrives in Canada he may notice "how primitive it looked", but he has become a barbarian himself, realising that "if he did not learn the language he would be lost," bereft of identity in his new environment, "a vault of secrets and memories" (*Lion* 46-7; Vauthier, 70-1).

Learning English is supposedly an act of assimilation, a device for migrants to assume their new nationhood. Ondaatje emphasizes this desire by showing the diverse contexts employed by migrants for language acquisition, mixing the everyday application of language with some more unusual transcultural outcomes: from the prosaic mouthing of songs at work to "parroting" films and plays so regularly that "when the matinee idol Wayne Burnett dropped dead during a performance, a Sicilian

butcher took over, knowing his lines and his blocking meticulously" (47). Ondaatje shows that language training is preparation for assuming a place in society. Yet it is also a palimpsest. The immigrants' devices for assuming language may be varied, but they all share a similar effect of replacing memories. The repetition of "My name is Ernest" by a class of migrants erases their own identity in the lying earnest-ness of their utterance. The severing of their old tongues divorces the previous history that is encapsulated in that language. Luc Sante suggests that the translation of meanings from one language to another is a process that ends in deficit. The mother tongue will always hold a complex of significant meanings and stories that will be absent in the surrogate register (Santé 97-112).

Similarly, in Ondaatje's novel, Nicholas is haunted by translation dreams, where "trees changed not just their names but their looks and character. Men started answering in falsettos. Dogs spoke out fast to him as they passed him on the street" (47). The cultural disjunction of linguistic translation is also active in the workplace. Although advancement in society is promised through the speaking of English, the "unraced" voices talking back contain such slurs as "Fucking wop! Fucking dago!" (185). Acts of speech and silence become political acts, then, with Patrick complicit in his acts of silence with "the Italian and Greeks towards the *bronco* foremen" of the tunnel (106), and he keeps his "true name and voice from the bosses at the leather yard, never spoke or answered them" (136). Community-within-difference, then, is also represented by Ondaatje in a shared silence (such as at the trans-national performances at the incomplete waterworks), as much as learning of different tongues.

Bridging the Gap.

In addition to slips of the tongue, Ondaatje's use of the revelatory signification of photography complicates a social history recording migrants and workers. Ondaatje uses the mechanics of photography as another parallel medium in the particularly self-aware constructed representation of reality, with a useful ability to replace one ideological "eye" with another. As Ondaatje is "one of the few North American writers who address the issue of our immigrant, working class history", it is fitting that he quotes the artistic work of another who used his work to re-map "a history silenced by official versions of public events" (Hutcheon, "Ex-centric" 133). The photography of Lewis Hine, the early twentieth century activist, is a model for the photographic reference in the novel, a treatment that blurs the distinction between a pictorial documentation and an "imagist" history in their similar practice of exhibition. Hine, once an unskilled labourer himself, captured subjects on film such as immigrants arriving in the Americas, the living conditions they encountered once there (both in urban and rural settings), and the stark depiction of the work available to this class (Meltzer and Cole 49-67). Hine saw his photography as "ever the Human Document to keep the present and the future in touch with the past" (Sontag 166). Ondaatje's portrayal of migrant culture and conditions, and the specific work environments available to them, parallels this visual record. When Ondaatje spins a tale of Temelcoff (also based on textual documentary evidence), with the particulars of bridge construction and the everyday heroics involved with suspension in space, a ghost image of Hine's Manhattan skyscraper builders seems superimposed (*Lion* 145; Hine 106-17.) Ondaatje states that:

> even in the archive photographs it is difficult to find him... the eye must search along the wall of sky to the speck of burned paper across the valley that is him, an exclamation mark, somewhere between bridge and river. He floats at the three hinges of the crescent-shaped steel arches. These knit the bridge together. The moment of cubism. (34)

Temelcoff is barely captured in a strictly "archival" sense. He is a mere burnt speck insubstantially floating against the contrasting solidity of the sky and the concrete and steel reality of the bridge itself. However, Ondaatje's exquisite depiction of Temelcoff's job, combining a poetic construction of activity with a display of concrete imagery, bridges the historical distance, constructing a view of the daredevil at work which possibly even surpasses the similar capture of Hine's workers suspended far above the fabric of Manhattan's lower skyline. Ondaatje's "cubist" moment, reflecting Berger's critical application of the term, is a multi-dimensional construction that leaves the reader with a concrete awareness of the historical space inhabited by such migrant workers. Temelcoff's job may be "special", yet I suggest that Ondaatje uses this depiction to erase the stigma of the "ordinary" workers largely forgotten in the social register. The point here *is* the almost overlooked figure of Temelcoff, who becomes the focal point in the imagist description, knitting the abstract suspension into the human field.

Fig. 7. (Hine 108).

The power of language to force a suspension of disbelief on the reader, especially when the "fiction" at play seems to be reinforced by archival work, is further heightened by use of what Barthes sees as the most referential of media: "a certificate of presence" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 87). Similarly, Hine's pictures of miners and migrant ghettos are a focal point for Ondaatje's development of imagery during the construction of the waterworks tunnel. It is in these passages that an explicit respect for this historiographic predecessor is expressed. According to Ondaatje, "Hine's photographs betray official history and put together another family", and Ondaatje, on one level, shares a similar impulse towards representation without trickery in his own art (*Lion* 145). Yet both are artists, and even if they attempt to capture reality, both photography and historical fiction can only depict and simulate the "real" and are prone to manipulation. Benjamin points out that the historical use of photographs is an essentially political activity which both "stirs in a special way" and "puts up signposts for [the viewer], right ones or wrong ones" (227-8). This postmodern artifice of implied simulacrum is something that is apparent throughout the novel, and is especially noticeable in Ondaatje's quotation of photographs. Duffy, writing about Ondaatje's use of reference to historical photographs, notes the misuse and imaginative adaptation of an image of a cyclist on the Bloor Street Viaduct (143). Apparently, Ondaatje seems to feel free to borrow from related cultural history (the disruption at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge by a rogue horseman), in order to create a story of mythic resonance to his own "history".

In the Skin of a Lion represents a political view of history, asserting the rights of workers and migrants to a voice that challenges the exclusive ideology of "national history". As an artistic answer to the (often racist) "filial" tradition of Canadian history, Michael Ondaatje uses a postmodernist methodology of narrative dispersal to

render conventional national "myth" invalid. In its place, Ondaatje builds up layers of a social history comprising oral accounts, civic archives, photography, pictorial art, cinema, newspaper clippings, historical texts and fiction, against the monocultural vision of the Canadian "nation" and fosters particular attention to the migrant working class and their marginalized, alternative histories of nationhood and construction.

Ondaatje's praxes then, are opposed to Rushdie's affect of alienation with "nations", in general, whether in direct opposition to mythically founded lies of Pakistan and modern India under the Gandhis or inflexible interpretations of Quranic lore, or indirectly distancing himself from personal affiliation with migrant "underclasses." While politically engaged, Rushdie remains a "floating" presence compared to Ondaatje. Ondaatje's deconstruction and alternative reconstruction of migrant nationhood exposes his position of in-between-ness as still heavily involved on the inside of the political scene of his host country.

Sleight Returns: Prodigal Migrancy.

The specific status of the in-between migrant and cultural hybridity are complex enough when examined in the context of a host culture. However, the possibility of return and re-encounter remains an alluring and further complicating part of a migrant aesthetic. In the next part of this chapter, I focus again on Ondaatje, chiefly looking at how *Running in the Family* and two companion texts, *Handwriting* and *Anil's Ghost,* consolidate the contradictions of the historical placement of the "migrant", demonstrating some of the problems faced with physical and literary return to a past homeland alongside the potential for another "newness entering the world". The examination of strategies of representation and identification reflects and continues some of the chief areas of attention in the previous chapter. However, whereas the

example of Edward Said raised topoi of exile and diaspora, and returns and homelands imagined from afar, and is also imaginatively examined in Rushdie's obsession with renarrating Bombay from afar, a concentration on Ondaatje's triple literary return to his homeland reveals a transmigrant consciousness that continues to be mobile in its shifting between temporal and spatial zones, generic representation, and the author's subjectivity even when in the homeland. These trips, encompassed in a travel memoir, a collection of poetry and a prose novel, expand the generic considerations and implications of travel writing to include the juncture between the domains of historical records, fiction, autobiography and the "nation". Certainly, such a juncture seems to make the recognition of historical reference particularly contentious, mired as it is between fluid narrative representations, and competing conceptual models of exoticism and inclusive difference, consciousness of the self and the history of the "national identity". The activity of the migrant, crossing historical borders and cultural distinctions, is one that is often reviled but nonetheless useful to the "global economy".

Running as a Strategy.

Nominally a description of two journeys back to the country of his birth and childhood, presently known as Sri Lanka, *Running in the Family* also embodies the common autobiographical desire to journey back to the author's childhood itself. The account of this double journey, however, also resides in the territory of contradictory and dubious biographies and fictionalised stories, building a childhood of "self and family forgotten, misremembered and recreated" (Solecki, "Paper Promiscuous" 334). Considerations of autobiographical "veracity" may seem complicated by such an inclusion of fictionalised material. Some critics even suggest that recognition of an

autobiographical subject in *Running in the Family* is a difficulty, considering the generic chaos that typifies such a work of postmodern eclecticism (Kamboureli; Verhoeven). Similarly, Ondaatje himself appears to class his work outside history, insisting that despite the "air of authenticity, [he] must confess that the book is not a history but a portrait or 'gesture'" (*Running* 206). Yet these positions are based on narrow parameters of terminology that are discarded by the text in its pursuit of newer, and more open, definitions of autobiography and history. By means of its use of a metafictional historicism, *Running in the Family* acknowledges the ideological movement between private and public spheres: defining the self against the nation, and the nation against the self.

One of Ondaatje's main concerns in *Running in the Family* is this postmodern politicising of "private" consciousness. Following the lead of Raymond Williams, who pointed out the need for a historical "structure of feeling" that mediates between social structure and cultural production, Ondaatje looks "to the experience that is otherwise recorded: in institutions, manners, customs, family memories" (qtd. in Harvey 8). *Running in the Family* demonstrates a fascination with these "records": particularly in the recording of "family memories" as a vehicle for interrogating histories of varying scale. Also the recording of "feelings" lends itself to the recognition of figurative "climate" (Solecki, "Paper Promiscuous" 334). The very length and nature of his "Acknowledgments" indicates this particular type of historicism at work. Alongside the plethora of referenced materials, ranging from the literary intertext of quoted poetry, to song lyrics and journals are lists of people interviewed, and stories sampled (207). I argue that the production of *Running in the Family* emphasizes "communal acts" of historical recollection, operating as it does within the dialogic space between the remembrances of "relatives, friends and

colleagues" (205). These memories inform personal, social and geographical levels of an historical awareness necessary to the author, returning from an extended residence abroad. The material gathered and patched together in a literary manner, shows a desire to reconstruct the figurative "place" of Ondaatje's childhood, a medium for placing his self in culture, and his personal experience into "history".

Re-examining the Travelling Subject.

The author's unconventional deployment of autobiography would seem to give rise to insurmountable difficulties in pursuit of a conventional historical placement. Postmodern concerns with identity, language and fiction, central to the genre of autobiography, mean that Ondaatje's "voyage" back to Sri Lanka is fraught with distances beyond those of mere physicality. The narrative design of *Running in the Family* particularly emphasises the border between autobiography and history as an unstable site of postmodern exchange. The historical journey that the author attempts is subject to problems with reference, with conflicting stories, "confused genealogies and rumour" (205), enigmatic photographs and unbridgeable gaps of language between his and his father's generation. Also, as the book progresses, there seems a danger that the project of autobiography, writing the self, may be at least partially obscured by this material. Smaro Kamboureli, for instance, contends that the work is "not a bona fide book at all" as "it deliberately postpones the naming of its genre" (Kamboureli 79). An indicator of this is the apparent shift of Ondaatje's "subject" in the book: from himself, through national history and biographies of family members, back to himself. The overriding structure of the book, this circularity, represents a break from the traditional structures of both autobiography and history. According to Michel Foucault, traditional history "aims at dissolving the singular event into an

ideal continuity - as a teleological movement of a natural process" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 124). Similarly, the "classical" form of autobiography is also said to tend towards "the linear teleology of 'male' narrative" (Eakin 190). By contrast, the linear order of cause and effect is largely missing from the patchy narrative of *Running in the Family.* Instead, as Ondaatje bends and buckles the novel's histories into a curve, back on themselves, orbiting his own past through running a circuit around the stories of his family and homeland, he describes a discontinuous historical circle which defies completion and seems unable to contract into a final realisation of the author's self-knowledge or "place".

However, with reference to a different critical model, many of these apparent barriers to an awareness of personal history become essential to Ondaatje's poetic reinsertion into the narrative of family history. The very disjunctiveness of Ondaatje's writing is a feature that places the author within an autobiographical structure of "writerly" experience: the act of writing from within history in a way that stresses its inconstancy. As narrative traditions, conventional history, biography, memoir and autobiography have often been separated by concerns of scale, subjectivity and referentiality. Recently, though, revisions by a strand of contemporary theorists have challenged this differentiation. The rhetoric of Roland Barthes, posed in the process of writing his own (anti-) autobiography, may ask "[d]o I not know that, *in the field of the subject, there is no referent?*" (Barthes, *Barthes* 56). However, the ambivalent relationship between self and writing that postmodern practice and theory continues to display suggests a resistance to this denial, and a place for the historical as a reference for the self (even in Barthes' own work [Eakin

3-23]).[51] Phillipe Lejeune responds to Barthes' statement with an ambivalent "autobiographical pact" of contradictions whereby the reader:

> believe[s] in the transparency of language, and in the existence of a complete subject who expresses himself through it.... Telling the truth about the self, constituting the self as a complete subject - it is a fantasy. In spite of the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing. (qtd. in Eakin 24).

The postmodern compromise between this realisation that the "self" is a construct and at the same time an "experiential fact" (Eakin 25), places autobiography uncomfortably between components of fiction and history. I suggest, however, that this contract with the reader for self-revelation deniably expresses an historical imperative. A new historicism is formulated by social scientists that emphasise that "we are in history as we are in the world; it serves as the horizon and background for our everyday experience" (Eakin 142).[52] As a self-reflexive work of metafiction, *Running in the Family* is representative of a postmodern poetic reconsideration of autobiography, wherein writerly digressions serve as an interface between the personal and general levels of what Foucault terms an "effective history". "Effective history" recognises in events their

> most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations... [including:] the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked "other". The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 124-5).

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[51] Eakin's analysis of Barthes' writing practice, in his "autobiography" and other works, shows an ambivalent survival of "the referent" that is contrary to the theoretical position, segregating self and text, represented in Barthes' "The Death of the Author".

[52] Quoting David Carr. Eakin also cites the work of Wilhelm Dlthey, Edmund Husserl, Phillipe Lejeune and Martin Heidegger as instrumental in emphasising the "historicity" of autobiography.

By fitting *Running in the Family* into such a model of history it is possible to recognise the self-conscious inclusion of Ondaatje as "the entry of a masked 'other'" that resolves itself into the elliptical subject of the novel. The presence of the author is defined against his writing of opposing events, emphasised by the reflective style and tone of reference, imposing a writerly "I" (or "eye") on the apparently heteroglossic material which he narrates. Each meeting, every account of the past and observation of the present, is related through the words of the author, selected, changed and ultimately "signed" by his presence. Implicit in the pervasive, first-person reflexivity of his narrative is the incentive to ownership, a situation where his "body must remember everything" (202), and so stake a claim to these memories.

Even the instances where narrative distance is apparently imposed are reconstituted into the body of Ondaatje's self-reflexive, revisionist history, when they are contextualised. For example, the dreamlike sequence that functions as a poetic prelude to the novel proper, changes from being a biographical fiction narrated by an indeterminate source to one tied to the structure of metafictional reference by what follows it:

> *Drought since December.*
>
> *All across the city men roll carts with ice clothed in sawdust. Later on, during a fever, the drought still continuing, his nightmare is that thorn trees in the garden send their hard roots underground towards the house climbing through windows so they can drink sweat off his body, steal the last of the saliva off his tongue. He snaps on the electricity just before daybreak. For twenty five years he has not lived in this country, though up to the age of eleven he slept in rooms like this – with no curtains, just delicate bars across the windows so no one could break in . And the floors of red cement polished smooth, cool against bare feet. Dawn through a garden. Clarity to leaves, fruit, the dark yellow of the King Coconut. This delicate light is allowed only a brief moment of the day. In ten minutes the garden will lie in a blaze of heat, frantic with noise and butterflies. Half a page – and the morning is already ancient.* (17)

The authorial distance implied by the use of "he" may seem to divorce this passage from the rest of the text. Combined with this, the use of the present tense implies a break with the retrospective, historical stance that dominates from this point on.

However, this distance can be bridged in a number of ways. This beautifully descriptive passage efficiently compounds many attributes that will be developed further in the space of the book. The thematic concern for time and place, with the evocative specificity of the scene, its imagination and concrete physicality, are juxtaposed against the telling of memory and the self-aware activity of writing itself. The metafictional subjectivity present in the narrator's telling of his subject's thoughts, dreams, sensations and memories, coupled with an awareness of time that matches the written action, creates a union between writer and subject that achieves a powerful presence within autobiography.

When the next passage of book is examined, this authorial omniscience appears even clearer. Ondaatje seems to converge his position as narrator and "the hero of the narrative" more clearly at this point, although, because he still does not name himself, the reader must infer this from circumstantial evidence of tone, knowledge of geography and an assumption of the connection to an historical Ondaatje a few pages later (*Running* 21-5; Jean Starobinski qtd. in Kamboureli 83). Nevertheless, when he recounts that "[w]hat began it all was the bright bone of a dream I could hardly hold onto" (21), the author symbolically resignifies the preceding passage. A retrospective reading turns this primarily novelistic passage into a piece of autobiographical fiction, with the distancing manner of address reminiscent of a Caesarean substitution of the self for an "other". Such a movement in address links Ondaatje's autobiographical methodology to that of Barthes, where everything about to be read "must be

considered as if spoken by a character in a novel", indicating the "doubleness of the self, as both narrator and narrated" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 40).

This awareness of the interchangeable role of writer and that which is written about is a prominent doubling effect of Ondaatje's literary juxtaposition in the rest of *Running in the Family*, comprising of both a fission and fusion of the narrative elements of biography, geography, language, literary and photographic intertext. Despite the slippage apparent in the division and mixing of these elements, the author does not simply debunk the specificity of their narrative attributes (Kamboureli 79). Instead, the postmodern combination of forms shows their interconnected nature as narrative devices that record a particular group of histories, fusing them into a partial defining of the self against an historical context. In this way, Ondaatje's experimental writing demonstrates the effect of history on the individual and illustrates Wilhelm Dilthey's assertion for autobiography as "the germinal cell of history" (Eakin 142).

Shifting Geographies.

Even if *Running in the Family* is considered an incomplete historical "gesture" (206), one that circles around its subject fictively, by doing so it is able poetically to define its author by means of placement within surroundings. One of the most compelling aspects of *Running in the Family* is this way that Ondaatje places himself both within and against a spatial background of landscape. From the start of the novel, Ondaatje's act of travelling functions semiotically, mixing the physicality of place and movement with symbolically kinetic imaginings that indicate a dynamic connection between history and geography, and a consciousness of identity. Physical location is used as a signifier for the "place" of history, a residence for memory.

Of initial significance, the autobiographical journey is defined by the emphasis on its nominally geographical elements. Ondaatje's travels are landmarked by reference to an architectural and natural topography: revisiting family homes and estates, churches, the harbour, gardens and wilderness areas. However, with the connection of these to historical contexts, both national and personal, the land is figuratively made to speak its past. The activity of mapping can be one that conjures up the aura of a place, rather than being a "realistic" representation.

Maps are self-referential shadows of the observers as much as a "true" record of physical characteristics. Although the author's "real" map of Sri Lanka may seem straightforward, a clearly defined, if slightly elliptical, physical shape (8), this fixity of image quickly runs off in various directions when the historical context is developed. Set on the opposing page to this seemingly forthright map is an observation that declaims the geographically fantastic. Oderic, a fourteenth century Franciscan monk, states that "I saw in this island fowls as big as our country geese having two heads... and other miraculous things which I will not here write of" (9). Ondaatje's juxtaposition of supposedly innocent image and imagistic fantasy acts to unsettle the reader's assumptions. The expectations of a realistic geography are immediately placed in doubt and the reader must reconsider the way that language, and the imagination implicit in observing experientially different situations, transmogrifies the physical "real" into the fantastic imaginings of the reader, even when the extent of the "miraculous" is only hinted at. Certainly, as the history of external observation of Sri Lanka is further mapped out, the place that Ondaatje refers to is shown to be a highly mutable construction. The very shape of the island and the act of its naming are revealed as unstable impositions by transient foreign powers.

The island has acted historically as a palimpsest, having been consistently redrawn and relabelled by a procession of cartographers:

> [o]n my brother's wall in Toronto are the false maps. Old portraits of Ceylon. The result of sightings, glances from trading vessels, the theories of sextant. The shapes differ so much they seem to be translations - by Ptolemy, Mercator, François Valentyn, Mortier, and Heydt - growing from mythic shapes into eventual accuracy. Amoeba, then stout rectangle, and then the island as we know it now, a pendant off the ear of India.... The maps reveal rumours of topography, the routes for invasion and trade, and the dark mad mind of travellers' tales appears throughout Arab and Chinese and medieval records. The island seduced all of Europe. The Portuguese. The Dutch. The English. And so its name changed, as well as its shape, - Serendip, Ratnapida ("island of gems"), Taprobane, Zeloan, Zeilan, Seyllan, Ceilon, and Ceylon - the wife of many marriages, courted by the sword or bible or language. This pendant, once its shape stood still, became a mirror. It pretended to reflect each European power till newer ships arrived and spilled their nationalities. (63-4)

In this passage, Ondaatje represents Ceylon's general history as one of multiple colonisations, physical and fabulous projections that are equally "false" in the imposition of their own order and slanted perspective. The exposition of different versions of mapping may remind the reader that all flat projections of topography are bound to their own, inherent distortions. To choose between such maps is to identify with the distortions peculiar to their projectors' perspectives. Such a cycle of exploration and invasion implicit in this kind of mapping sets up a pattern that is developed in Ondaatje's narrative "mapping", a pattern of replacements that challenges the stability of the present historical "reality" of the island.

Ondaatje's revelations of ideology as an implicit concern in the process of mapping make his own versions equally vulnerable to revision. The difference in

Running in the Family is that such substitutions are part of its metafictional self-awareness. In a similar way to the multiple, imperial revisions of geography, the "cartography" of Ondaatje's text superimposes many different models of history and historical narrative over each other, with an awareness that no single one takes precedence. His personal mappings of his homeland, implicit in both the physicality of his reflexive return from abroad and the journey around the island, are combined into a fictional encirclement that reflects the history of circumspect reconnaissance, undermining the certitude of identity. Against this background mapping, we can "watch the [author's] hand move. Waiting for it to say something, to stumble casually on a perception, the shape of an unknown thing" (190). Even when he starts with a seemingly realistic cartography, the author introduces features that alter that reality. This is the case where he takes an example, the "Ceylon Road and Rail Map", as a semiotic device and writes over it, with a knowledge of his own travels, the imperial history of engineering that built the "real" roads and rails depicted, and his family's use and highjacking of these through the possession of stories (147-55). Physical and symbolic possession is contended with in his father's drunken commandeering of trains at gunpoint and the annexation of roadhouses' log books in a slanderous feud. The genealogical inheritance, in blood and stories, to these actions functions to strengthen Ondaatje's claim to inhabit this map. However, other features of historical mapping assert a continuing anxiety over historical placement.

Inside and Outside the Exotic Subject.

The nexus of geographies reflects the author's desire to elevate his contradictory status as both native and touristic migrant. His paradoxical statement, "I am the foreigner. I am the prodigal who hates the foreigner" (79), describes a conflict of

position that represents a temporal dislocation as much as the division in his self between spatial alienation and belonging. Linked to his return, the physical circumnavigation of the globe from his new home of Canada to his exotic dreaming of "*Asia*" (17-22), Ondaatje, on the one hand, assumes some of the features of an "orientalist". However, though one aspect of the author may conform to Edward Said's view of the West defining itself against the "otherness" of Eastern stereotypes,[53] Ondaatje is also travelling to his former homeland, in a quest for its recognisable past. The ideological aspect of geographical naming is integral to this desire. Calling his country "Ceylon", the author may seem curiously to deny the island's present, postcolonial identity as Sri Lanka, leaving himself vulnerable to the criticism of "glamorising" colonialism and producing an exoticist, "escapist" text (Huggan, "Exoticism and Ethnicity" 119).

As an example of this, Arun Mukherjee argues that Ondaatje is guilty of producing a narrative of unfavourable political solipsism because he "does not get drawn into the acts of living, which involves the need to deal with the burning issues of his time", namely the continuing ethnic conflict between Tamil separatists and the Sinhalese government (34). In his subsequent, fictional return to Sri Lanka, in *Anil's Ghost,* the treatment of war, death and torture is a substantial answer to such a criticism, but even when other critics of *Running in the Family* also place him "outside of time", they do not go so far as to accuse him of historical blindness (MacIntyre; Kanaganayakam; Sugunasiri). Put into context with his stated "socialist tendencies" (84), the act of naming his island "Ceylon" places the narrative in the past of his childhood, influencing even the contemporary scenes into a retrospective

[53] Said's analysis of the culturally stereotypical visioning of East is prevalent in his work (see, fro example, *Orientalism*; *The World, the Text, and the Critic* and *Culture and Imperialism*).

modality, intensely personal in tone. In this imaginative mapping of the memory, Ondaatje mirrors the concerns of Rushdie:

> writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back.... [but] we must do so in the knowledge... that our physical alienation ... almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands. (*Imaginary Homelands* 268).

Situated against this temporal alienation, though, is the other part of the "stereoscopic vision", from the perspective of the "real" return voyage (Davis). Part of this "stereoscopic vision" is also due to Ondaatje's ancestry. The colonial legacy of settlement of relatively new, other "nationalities" gives some sense of limited inheritance, yet this is undermined by the ironic colonial location that imposes an uncertain identification:

> my own ancestor arriving in 1600, a doctor who cured the residing governor's daughter with a strange herb and was rewarded with land, a foreign wife, and a new name which was a Dutch spelling of his own. Ondaatje. A parody of the ruling language. And when his Dutch wife died, marrying a Sinhalese woman, having nine children, and remaining. Here. At the centre of the rumour. At this point of the map. (64)

Although the ancestor remains and intermarries, seemingly cementing his place in the history of the island with this story of achievement and connection, the equivalence of the place with "rumour" effectively displaces the settler within the fabrication of colonial discourse. By multiple acts of renaming, and the recreation, through fabulous "rumours", of a colonially imagined Ceylon, the appellation of original identity is buried under a superficial new order. Passages such as this may appear to display the island's malleability to the eye and tongue of the beholding invader, and a

legacy of acquiescence to the claims imposed upon the islanders. However, within the mimetic act of replicating the colonial power lie the seeds of a resistance that creates a specificity of location.

Articulated Resistance.

Ondaatje's vision of his homeland and his self-defining relationship to it reveals a resistance to a totality of European cultural domination. In their circumnavigating and circumlocuting "maps" of the island, the colonising influences are revealed as superficial, superimposed and superseded by the next arrival, with no distinct, lasting legacy. In contrast, there is a component of resistance in the island's "pretence" to submission, and its ability to shrug off each former colonial power by drawing on its own continuing legacy of language (64). Through the medium of linguistic and cultural mimicry, Ondaatje exposes the ambivalence of colonial mapping, and develops possible locations for a culture of his own making that challenges both colonial and postcolonial "nationalism". Although colonialism may attempt to supplant native and settler geographic "authenticity" by reflective acts of vision and speech, this is undercut by comic facets of "irony, mimicry and repetition" integral to its own endeavour (Bhabha 85). Bhabha presents

> colonial mimicry [as] the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.* Which is to say, the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority... is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy... the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualises power. (86).

The language and vision of colonial authority, then, circumvent that very authority by their inability to define the colonial subject who is both an "Other" and yet "*almost the same*" as the Metropolitan subject. This condition is even to be acknowledged where territory is thoroughly annexed in both physical and linguistic terms. Even in Algeria, where French was convincingly installed as the national language, Derrida notes a duality ("auto-heteronomy") of tone between its power as the establishment and the "other" (Derrida qtd. in Apter 16).

Ondaatje treats this slippage of identification with irony, as he examines the facets of acculturation and hybrid differentiation twined in his own heritage. The epigraphs at the beginning of *Running in the Family* display the Eurocentric visions of Ceylonese insularity: imaginative fantasy coupled with the implication of culturally instituted ignorance. Colonial fantasies of fabulous creatures are, in one sense, an imposition of difference partially realised where narrative meets reality, when imaginary, double-headed geese are followed by the real "dragons": the kabaragoyas and thalagoyas (9, 73). Yet where the colonial authority sees this difference in terms of primitive local colour which is a sign for cultural underdevelopment, and a regressive world-vision, through a poetic revisiting of the local "tongue" the author is able to reinstate the power of local knowledge. The mimicry of colonial stereotype in a local newspaper is made ironic by this slippage of "tongue":

> "[t]he Americans were able to put a man on the moon because they knew English, The Sinhalese and Tamils whose knowledge of English was poor, thought that the earth was flat."
>
> Douglas Amarasekera, *Ceylon Sunday Times* 29.1.78 (9)

With its inference that the native language is isolated from real knowledge, (the underprivileged tongue of flatlanders in comparison to English knowledge), this racist putdown, cribbed from a local newspaper, displays the desire for mimicry and

replication of the privileged knowledge that is signified by the language of colonial discourse, alongside the embarrassment of difference.

Ondaatje, though, reverses this sentiment with his demonstrations of colonial stupidity in the face of complex local knowledge. He sees a history of "too many foreigners... the 'Karapothas' as my niece calls them - the beetles with white spots who never grew ancient here, who stepped in and admired the landscape, disliked the 'inquisitive natives' and left" (80), leaving behind short-sighted observations. Literary travellers like Edward Lear, Virginia Woolf, and D.H. Lawrence are alike in their bigoted catalogues of "figurative dirt", "evil jungles", "bothery-idiotic... savages", and "paw-paw stinking buddhists" (78-9).

Against this, Ondaatje builds a wealth of knowledge, of subtle flora and fauna, poetry, and experiences that can teach the West if given the opportunity. In this, alternative, "historical relation" between cultures, he uses the example of Robert Knox, forcibly educated by a captivity of twenty years, whose account of the island was, ironically, the basis for Defoe's colonial survival manual, *Robinson Crusoe* (82). In this example, the mimicry is temporarily reversed, with Western literature challenged by one of the "very few foreigners [who] truly knew where they were" (83), and yet acknowledged, transmitted and transculturated back into that tradition of "Eurocentric" historicism. Such linguistic subversion, however, is not always so easily reversible.

"Eating" his Own Tongue.

Ondaatje's own use of the "native" tongue demonstrates its powerful agency in the lasting generation of the political difference that informs his historical identity and survives migrancy. Mimicry and contestation of language form an integral part of his

heritage, a linguistic genealogy of resistance that resonates in both the personal and public history of the author. In this scheme, his name itself becomes an ambivalent sign of cultural slippage. The author is, in part, one of these foreigners, with a foreign name and imported sensibilities, noting the difficulties of his own journey, such as the heat and the "lying" natives. Within the metafictional awareness that he creates, though, he mediates these "lies" into a fertile, native imagination that is central to his own identity. When faced with the loss of his imported soap, unconvincingly attributed to theft by a wild pig, Ondaatje stifles a stereotypical reaction of colonial frustration and instead lets his (native) poetic imagination run wild:

> [w]hat does this wild pig want soap for? Visions begin to form of the creature returning to his friends with Pears Transparent Soap and then all of them bathing and scrubbing their armpits in the rain in a foul parody of us. I can see their mouths open to catch drops of water on their tongues, washing their hooves, standing complacently under the drain spout, and then moving in Pears fragrance to a dinner of Manikappolu garbage. (143)

The "parody" of this animal scene displays the collapsing of some of the anxieties of belonging to the scene. The transference of human characteristics, a kind of party trick that further reflects back on the author's own proclivities (22), is also a surrender of his sign of foreignness to this natural language. Ondaatje admits that "[i]f I am to die soon I would choose to die now under his wet alphabet of tusk, while I am cool and clean and in good company" (142). I read in this true "native" horn both a dangerous pen, capable of applying a final, natural signature over Ondaatje's life, but also the desire for a "clean" association with the present occupants of "Ceylon": a language of meeting and comradeship.

Of course the effects of the native "alphabet" are not limited to the present moment. The historical slippage of his name is one that has existed since its bestowal, in the early seventeenth century. The parody of renaming, converting the

signature of a family to the foreign language of the rulers, does not equate to a settled identification with those rulers (64). Instead, the language of mongrel difference reflects the cultural legacy of the author. The mixture of racial origins, native and settler, leads to a hybridity of culture that displays some degree of permanence at the same time as active difference. By the time of Ondaatje's grandparents' generation, their circle of friends mixes the social elements of external, European culture (with social engagements, foreign education and cinema), with a sense of belonging to Ceylon:

> everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations. There was a large social gap between this circle and the Europeans and English who were never part of the Ceylonese community... seen as transients, snobs and racists... quite separate from those who had intermarried and who lived here permanently. (41)

Despite the isolated and idiosyncratic pride in Tamil connections that Mervyn Ondaatje (the author's father) expresses, this group is also markedly separate from the Sinhalese "natives". The floating status of this "Creole" social group is based largely on their ability to define themselves outside the limits of "nationality" (41), and yet also ensure a lasting geographical attachment in historical terms. Even more symbolically resonant, he uses a real tongue as an expressive referent for this native voice:

> [t]he thalagoya has a rasping tongue that "catches" and hooks objects. There is a myth that if a child is given thalagoya tongue to eat he will become brilliantly articulate, will always speak beautifully, and in his speech be able to "catch" and collect wonderful, humorous information. (73)

Thus it can be seen that Ondaatje enhances the mythical power of a native tongue by comparison to the negative language of colonialism. This culinary gift of "tongue" is

a link to the language of his family, on a personal level, and also the island's turbulent past, a fusion of spoken and written poetry that is a postmodern articulation of a history of resistance.

"Revolutionary" Handwriting.

In *Running in the Family* the postmodern mixing of written script and an oral tradition is an accommodation that Ondaatje uses to unsettle conventional historiography, and also a way of emphasizing a specific language to which he returns: Ceylonese writing and speaking share facets of the poetic discourse of revolution, a feature that interrogates the theoretical genealogy of language. In terms of theorising Ondaatje's movement back to language, Derrida's pun on Nietzschean self-writing, "Otobiography", with its insightful study of language's role in relating memory, is a useful parallel reading for Ondaatje's project. Nietzsche, as interpreted by Derrida, divides language into two parts: the "dead", written text of the father, and the living "mother tongue". He sees the "language of the living feminine [positioned] against death, against the dead.... History or historical..., which deals or negotiates with the dead, is the science of the father" (Derrida 21-2). Nietzsche calls for a reinvestment of history with corporeal subjectivity, a reintroduction of the "mother tongue" into historical narrative. The early Barthesian position echoes the point, visualising the aspect of death implicit in this "male" act of writing:

> writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.... As soon as something is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality... this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. (Barthes, *Image* 142).

Foucault also argues this line, seeing a need to incorporate the "feminising" of language in history with its corresponding change of subject matter. The "feminine" perspective of private experience, grounded in an awareness of the body and familial connections, has become a political vision that has, through the agency of new, postmodern reconsiderations of autobiography, staked a claim within and challenged the teleological status of "male" historical narrative (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 125). Germaine Bree's treatment of the term "autogynography" signals a differently configured narrative structure from "male" teleological development, a writing style that is more akin to a collectively identified subjectivity (qt. Eakin 80). *Running in the Family* seems to exist within this linguistic cross over, eminently focused on the relationships between spoken and written forms in general and personal history, and interested in placement within a collective history.

In particular, Ondaatje consistently goes to the women of his past in order to bridge the gaps of separation, to efface the isolation of migration (Hutcheon, *Politics* 161). The multiplicity of the spoken, "feminine" versions of his history crowd into the text; beautiful, gossipy alternative stories that vie for a place within the constraints of written account. Hence the chapter, "the conversation" (105-9), which brilliantly captures the verbal challenges to the ability of written language as a representational medium, but of course in written form: overlapping characters, perspectives, misunderstandings and apparently "three stories" being told at once ("No *one,* everybody says laughing" [108]) dramatise the notion of collectively identified subjectivities. Particular characteristic emphasis is given on the strongest female influences, embodied in the presence of his surrounding family of women. One example of this is when Ondaatje acknowledges this intrinsic presence of women, his "Aunts", in his story, and *as* his story:

> How I have used them... They knit the story together, each memory a wild thread in the sarong.[...] My aunt Dolly stands five feet tall, weighing seventy pounds. She has not stopped smoking since the age of fifteen and her 80-year-old brain leaps like a spark plug bringing this year and that year to life. Always repeating the last three words of your question and then turning a surprising corner on her own. (110).

Similarly, his adventurous grandmother, Lalla, runs through his story engagingly, up until her death by "natural causes" ("What?" "Floods." [23]).

Embracing Language.

Thus the genealogy of Ceylonese cultural difference, and its influence on the formation of the author, is also expressed in the fusion of these two facets of language: "masculine" and "feminine" histories. This can be seen in the blurring of margins between writing and speaking. The script of the island, having a curving style fit to be reproduced on the fragile surface of leaves, is peculiar to Ceylon, a break from the constraining lines of mainland, angular Sanskrit even as it challenges the history such writing represents, and it is the mark of desire for return (83). It is a beautiful form, appropriate for the aesthetic appreciation of a poet even when it is used as a punishment of lines. Forever linked in his childhood imagination with punishment, the "parade ground" of written language only seems to transcend that repression, in "rude expressions on walls and desks" (84). Ceylon's history of revolution is mapped by its use of graffiti as a poetic medium, a medium for a slippage from authority into resistance. In love and war Ceylonese have painted poetry on public surfaces everywhere, as protests against repression, despotic government, and torture, and expressions of tenderness. These are often fleeting utterances, sharing the impermanent characteristics of speech.

Ondaatje's own publicity as poet can be seen to inherit this political activity of protest, continuing an oral tradition of dissent and cultural difference. As proof of this, the author's own poems ("High Flowers", "To Colombo" and "The Cinnamon Peeler") are incorporated into sequence of poems that includes the powerfully anticolonialist "Don't Talk To Me About Matisse..." (by Lakdasa Wikkramasinha), and a communal, graffiti poem from the fifth century (85-97). Such a differentiated style is emphasised in Ondaatje's subsequent collection of poetry, *Handwriting,* which returns and celebrates short, unsettled narratives of Ceylonese history, by an order of scripted difference. Poems from this volume emphasise the local traditions of calligraphy for the recording of lovers, scholars, war and migrants.

Migrant Genealogy.

I see the genealogy of language also reflected in Ondaatje's historical placement against the stories of his parents in *Running in the Family.* The inheritance of language makes the author aware of his own status as not just a physical but also a cultural product of this family. In other work, such as *Coming Through Slaughter,* the narrator's association and substitution complicate biographical pursuit. The blurring of distinction between subject and eye of the perceiver can be termed as a kind of figurative brotherhood, a priority of connection before considerations of "your nation your colour your age" (*Coming Through Slaughter* 134). *Running in the Family* is both a continuation and a complication of these familial concerns. Ondaatje's present is "haunted" by aspects of his past: "the family I had grown from - those relations from my parents' generation who stood in my memory like a frozen opera. I wanted to touch them into words" (22). The metaphorical brotherhood of artistry becomes a voyage swimming against the current of inheritance, and a desire to circle his parents.

It is through the family's stories that the Nietzschean "generation" of language and genealogy meet. However, Ondaatje discovers the gap between a legacy of meaning and the means to express it. What runs in the family is a propensity for eccentric acts and a desire to embellish the stories of these acts. The various familial "aides mémoire" (like his "minotaur" Aunt Phyllis), display a level of continual creation that defies the attempts "to trace the maze of relationships in our ancestry" (25). In sessions discussing the family past:

> we will trade anecdotes and faint memories, trying to swell them with the order of dates and asides, interlocking them all as if assembling the hull of a ship. No story is ever told just once. Whether a memory or funny hideous scandal, we will return to it an hour later and retell the story with additions and this time a few judgements thrown in. In this way history is organised. (26)

The whole book reflects this historical praxis. In the novelisation of disparate elements this "oral" feature of constant reconsideration of the "facts" means that no story is ever complete, no life fully told. Whereas "realistic" historical novels would smooth over the disparities and fractures evident from the fusion of different accounts, Ondaatje's metafictional technique allows rival histories to coexist and argue with each other, as in his hilarious rendition of a "lunch conversation", where three different events are conflated into one confused story (105-9). In the inescapable confusion of discourse that such relationships entail, the subjects of his biographical pursuit escape from the centre of the frame, and the activity of telling takes over.

Photography is one aspect of this narrative telling, another genealogy of language that escapes easy categorising in *Running in the Family.* It functions within a duality of reference, both synchronic and diachronic, in its relationship to history. The

inclusion of photographs in the book can demonstrate the desire to adequately source the archives of his family history. As Susan Sontag argues:

> [p]hotography is not practiced by most people as an art. It is mainly a social rite.... [T]hrough photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself - a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness. It hardly matters what activities are photographed so long as photographs get taken and are cherished. Photography becomes a rite of family life just when... the very institution of the family starts undergoing radical surgery.... Those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives. A family's photograph album is generally about the extended family - and, often, is all that remains of it. (8-9).

Ondaatje's compiling of an album of family pictures and historical scenes from his family's past seems to fit into this observation, consistent with finding a synchronic, "frozen", historical identity within such images. However, the photographs also contain the potential for a diachronic slippage that fulfils his need to "touch [his frozen family] into words" (22).

Within the choice of images, some conform to the "rite" of bearing witness to family occasions and gatherings. However, the style of the selected photographs and their placement within the text challenge the notion of his family's "connectedness". Ondaatje follows Barthes' example: "I have kept only the images which enthral me" (Barthes, *Barthes* 3). Each photograph in the book is accompanied by a title, nominally a heading for the next section of the novel, yet also functioning as a caption to the picture. Some seem more appropriate than others, with a varying degree of theatricality and humour informing the relationship. Two images that particularly stand out in their apparent depiction of lunacy are parodies of the familial celebrations that Sontag lists. The first photo, under the title "eclipse plumage" depicts the family in excessively elaborate fancy dress (103). The following stories, however, confirm

the eccentricity of such a scene as key to understanding the outlandish behaviour of Ondaatje's family. Similarly, Ondaatje chronicles a picture that he had "been waiting for all my life. My father and mother together. May 1932" (161). The expected synchronic recognition of their relationship, a frozen moment confirming the author's heritage, is altered by the parodic nature of the image and the extended narration of it by the author:

> [t]hey are on their honeymoon and the two of them, very soberly dressed, have walked into a photographic studio. The photographer is used to wedding pictures. He has probably seen every pose. My father sits facing the camera, my mother stands beside him and bends over so that her face is in profile on a level with his. Then they both begin to make hideous faces.
>
> My father's pupils droop to the south-west corner of his sockets. His jaw falls and resettles into a groan that is half idiot, half shock. (All this emphasised by his dark suit and well-combed hair.) My mother in white has twisted her lovely features and stuck out her jaw and upper lip so that her profile is in the posture of a monkey. The print is made into a postcard and sent through the mail to various friends. On the back my father has written, "*What we think of married life.*"
>
> Everything is there, of course. Their good looks behind the tortured faces, their mutual humour, and the fact that both of them are hams of a very superior sort. The evidence I wanted that they were absolutely perfect for each other. My father's tanned skin, my mother's milk paleness, and this theatre of their own making. It is the only photograph I have found of the two of them together. (161-2)

This verbalising of the image prior to its actual, physical representation does not necessarily detract from the picture's value as a real artefact. Instead, by talking a history around the capture of the image, describing the situation, its subsequent use, and his own expectations and reaction, Ondaatje's narration extends the photograph beyond its own physical presence, re-envisaging it into life. By interpreting it for the

reader, his photograph is able to represent the "uniqueness" of the subjects, "everything" in their life is compressed into the photograph, and the narrative "becomes" the image. This slippage of the photographic scene into "life", a conversion into a "cinematic" imagination, demonstrates that photography's reputation as the most referential of all the arts is not misplaced, with the lens capturing the referent in a manner that writing desires for itself.

Fig. 8. (*Running in the Family* 163).

These photographic qualities are also present in the imagistic process of writing *Running in the Family*. By their means Michael Ondaatje effectively inverts the normal process of genealogy, giving birth to his parents in his imagination. This creative process can be particularly observed in his writerly memory, the process of selection and juxtaposition, and poetic extensions of events, figurative photography or cinematography in the recreation of his father and mother as "characters". The figures born, however, are bound by the limitations and disparities of their component material: a model of incompletable, filial histories. Conspicuously, the figure of the father is an elusive subject, both effaced by too much public speculation and the dearth of private knowledge. In a section called "Dialogues", the son shows eleven story fragments that all efface the trace of his father and mother even as they dramatise their life (173-8). Towards the end of Mervyn Ondaatje's life, the dramatic

"excess of his gestures earlier in his life", and the swarming variations of those actions recounted, are placed against a realisation that he had become a "miniaturist pleased by small things, the decent gestures among a small circle of family and friends. He made up lovely songs about every dog he had owned..." (201). The association with dogs in his father's construction is emblematic for the process. The "bright bone of a dream" that instigates the journey back, is an image of his "father, chaotic, surrounded by dogs, and all of them were screaming and barking into the tropical landscape" (21). Towards the end of this journey, in a section entitled "The Bone" this scene is recapitulated:

> [t]here is a story about my father I cannot come to terms with. It is one of the versions of his train escapade.... My father is walking towards [his tracker], huge and naked. In one hand he holds five ropes, and dangling on the end of each of them is a black dog. None of the five are touching the ground. He is holding his arm outstretched, holding them with one arm as if he has supernatural strength. Terrible noises are coming from him and from all the dogs as if there is a conversation between them that is subterranean, volcanic. All their tongues hanging out. (181)

The surrounding noise of the "dogs" seems to reinforce the image of Mervyn Ondaatje as a taciturn, secretive man camouflaged by fictional "life" wrapped around him. The son's inability to encircle a true version of his father in the face of the "female" story-tellings of his family and friends forces him to "guess around him" (200). In the orbiting of the father, the poetic repetition of the story of the dogs in the dream emphasises the "mongrel" nature of the biography.[54] At the same time, the dogs represent the mirror surface of chaotic "alter egos" for both author and father: a symbolically uneasy and incomplete reflection (Siemerling, 144).

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[54] Barbour makes reference on several occasions to Ondaatje's self-reference as a mongrel, his personal interest in dog breeding, and the presence of various strays, mongrels, and ill-bred mutts within his work.

Even where the author patches over gaps in knowledge with fiction, the figure of his father is moving away from the writer because of the imposition of metafictional awareness. This is demonstrated when a fictionalised version of his father reconstructs his thoughts, interposing a subjective "I" (188), then observes ants "deconstructing" a novel: "[a] whole battalion was carrying one page away from its source, carrying the intimate print as if rolling a tablet away from him. He knelt down on the red tile, slowly, not wishing to disturb their work. It was page *189*" (*Running* 189; Giltrow and Stouck 175).[55] The correspondence of page numbers between Ondaatje's book and this metafictional other alerts the reader to the correspondence of action. The escape of the father with the figurative disintegration of the book is brought about through the self-effacing activity of writing, an activity that parallels the decay of other family records by the authorship of Nature (Ratcliffe 21).

In a very similar way, approaching knowledge of his mother is also contingent on the reliance on secondary "dialogic" discourse, the stories others tell of their perceptions of past events, often changing in the telling and always influenced by a limitation of understanding, an only partial comprehension of the private lives that they relate. Hence the competing stories are a composite picture, an identikit of particular features and events: her work, her forbearance in the face of drunkenness, or ability to hold her own in a bitter argument. Some of these stories are also told in reaction to bits of Ondaatje's text being read: a reaction that confirms a communal activity in the sharing of the personal, the private (173-8).

It is in these narrative traces that *Running in the Family* reveals itself as potently autobiographical. The portraits of his father and mother are not a complete biography

[55] Giltrow and Stouck see this shift in address as a "nudg[ing of] the identity of the speaker away from the son and towards the father", yet the context seems to more strongly suggest an authorial "telling" of internal monologue that reflects back on the son.

because the author is not privy to private information. An early passage demonstrates his impulse to uncover such information:

> nothing is said of the closeness between two people: how they grew in the shade of each other's presence. No one speaks of that exchange of gift and character - the way a person took on and recognised in himself the smile of a lover.... I want to sit down with someone and talk with utter directness, want to talk to all the lost history like that deserving lover. (54)

This kind of information, by its very nature, is not available, though. Despite the attempts of emulating even his father's drunkenness (Ray 41), the ever-present gap in mimicry means that the son's drinking is an imitative caricature that cannot keep up with his father (Bhabha 86-7). In the end, with the moving subject not able to be pinned down, Ondaatje's book is self-referential, focusing on his own sense of loss, the gap in knowledge that can never be bridged, the private love that is never fully expressed or remembered in writing. It is a psychology of retrospective substitution, with an interesting intertextual revision of Shakespeare's Edmund, from *King Lear.* In this version, the bastard son seeks to rewrite history but is still doomed to an incomplete, one-sided narration, as he realises, "[h]e died before I even thought of such things" (180). Although his brother tells him that he "must get this book right... [y]ou can only write it once", Ondaatje is finally comfortable with the book's incompleteness: "in the end all your children move among scattered acts and memories with no more clues. Not that we ever thought we would be able to fully understand you. Love is often enough, towards your stadium of small things" (201).

This is the kind of desire for the familial and familiar present also in a later poem of return, ironically titled "Flight":

> In the half-dark cabin of Air Lanka Flight 5
>
> the seventy-year-old lady next to me begins to comb

her long white hair, then braids it in the faint light.

Her husband, Mr Jayasinghe, asleep beside her.

Pins in her mouth. She rolls her hair,

curls it into a bun, like my mother's.

Two hours before reaching Katunayake airport. (*Handwriting* 47).

In the display of an everyday ritual, Ondaatje watches a familiar history taking place, a maternal history which accesses the anticipation of return contained within the "flight." Return becomes departure: a new narrative made available due to the existence of the presented past.

Running in the Family represents a "running" back to and around the past, with feet and tongue; a postmodern journey that interrogates the psychological and political dimensions of personal history by novelistic means. Though by no means a "conventional" autobiography, by writing the book Michael Ondaatje acts on this symbolic desire to place his self in an historical relation to his family, his cultural inheritance and his awareness of "place" as a temporal as well as spatial location. A migrant aesthetic, like that of diaspora discussed in the previous chapter, incorporates practices of both movement and dwelling. I would argue that Ondaatje's work demonstrates that the movement is between at least two sites of dwelling and is not necessarily "one-way." Even in an abstract sense, I consider Ondaatje's intertextual use of historical and fictional documentaries as travelling acts, imagistic, relational mirrors, into which the author can "cinematically" place himself. The tracing of Ondaatje's ancestry on the map of the past gives a context to his own, present, displacement within the "rumours of topography" (64) and a genealogy that changes the conventions of historical discourse, invading the official, public sphere with the political self.

Moving Ends.

Throughout this last chapter, I have demonstrated the shifting nature of migrant subjectivity, running through a small family of texts and authors to test some of different stances taken, and assess the implications of this "type" of travel. Examining Rushdie and Ondaatje has given me the opportunity to contend that the construction of solidarity with divergent types of migrant is highly dependent on the pace at which authors move, and the place they constructs for themselves as subjects of their texts.

While Rushdie presents a playful "moving target" with his take on migrant aesthetics and issues, I have argued that this leaves him vulnerable to a kind of self-disenfranchisement. Rushdie eloquently claims that,

> if *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's-eye view of the world. If is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity. ("In Good Faith" 394)

However, this universalising sentiment, implying that we are all migrants, contains the problem in his general praxis: a signal that his version of migrant subjectivity is one that pictures itself as unbound by affiliation or final responsibility to its own criticisms. Despite considerable allusion to his childhood Bombay and to the specifics of migrant experience in his work, Rushdie tends to abstract and "foreshorten" key features of the decolonising contexts that sustain his work and people it (Brennan 166). Instead of embodying a migrant perspective, Rushdie subjectively places himself in roles more in keeping with an aestheticized tourism, or the suspended dislocation of nomadic wandering, viewing migrant subjects from a distance. Such a perception would seem to fulfil Stuart Hall's claim of the impossibility of return for this type of "migrant" subject with any prospective return

thoroughly fantasized and fabulated into abstraction; I propose that Rushdie is now much more "at-home" in the West than the apparent subjects of his novels indicate.

On the other hand, by my examination of Ondaatje's subjective constructions in this chapter I suggest a different perspective on the role of migrant authorship. Ondaatje particularly grounds his travelling subjects in histories: imaginative, concrete, public and private. Based on this field, his production of a migrant aesthetic is at once much more specific in its application of contingency and context, but also, paradoxically, more topically universal in application to an understanding of contemporary, globalised relations; when you look at specific conditions more closely, then the interconnectedness of migrant experience is more persuasively articulated. From his construction of the nation-forming immigrant-worker histories of Canada to his actually-achieved visit to his childhood homeland, he proves that returns, historical and spatial, are possible within the scope of a migrant travel subjectivity. In a manner akin to that of Edward Said, Ondaatje's travel practice demonstrates an ability to realise the multiple potential perspectives of an in-between position without surrendering political or cultural convictions. This example displays one of the key outcomes of this study, overall: suggesting the possibilities for retaining key political agency in the face of the ever-increasing disjuncture of global movement; having something to say and something that matters which is capable of "migrating" within interconnected zones of cultural contact and resistance.

CONCLUSION.

Circumscribing the World: Writing Around the Travelling Subject and Issues of Globalised Contact.

> One by-product of *real travel* was something that has virtually disappeared, the travel-book as a record of an inquiry and a report of the effect of the inquiry on the mind and imagination of the traveller. (Paul Fussell 39 [emphasis added]).

> When I first came to that quiet corner of the Nile Delta I had expected to find on that most ancient and most settled of soils a settled and restful people. I couldn't have been more wrong. The men of the village had all the busy restlessness of airline passengers in a transit lounge.... This was not new... it was as though people had drifted here from every corner of the Middle East. The wanderlust of its founders had been ploughed into the soil of the village: it seemed to me sometimes that every man in it was a traveller. (Amitav Ghosh 135).

Although Paul Fussell may claim to mourn the passing of what *he* calls "*real travel*", and by association "*real* travellers" (italics added), it is interesting to note that other people still manage to actually travel and write, and increasingly note a growing awareness of the presence of other travellers. In fact, if anything recent years have seen a proliferation of travellers. This is the main point made by Ghosh in the extract above, and one not lost on James Clifford, who reformulates Ghosh's point, saying, "everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel" (Clifford, *Routes* 2). Of course, a distinction needs to be made. Fussell laments the passing of a

highly particularised mode and representative of "travel", heavily mythologized around the trope of modernist exile (Kaplan 50). Furthermore, his nostalgia for a lost, "golden age" of travel, "*real travel*", betrays an affiliation with an imperialist past and class, and is thus distressed with an apparent loss of the upper- and middle-class "certainties" of subjective control (Kaplan 50). Fussell apparently feels that the context that allowed this model of inquiry, and the assumption of a rational evaluation of the subjects of this travel writing, have become, sadly (to him) debased by an opening out of the possibilities for differentiated travelling subjects and subjects of travel: the proliferation of travel and the classes of those able to "experience" it. Such a lament reflects on the passing of what Pratt considers an integral part of the high imperial tradition: "the conventions of travel and exploration writing (production and reception) constitute the European subject as a self-sufficient, monadic source of knowledge" (136).

The purpose of this thesis has been to inquire into the contemporary "crisis" of representation and subjectivity that has beset this "monadic" view, by examining recent exemplary texts and theories of displacement, in order to provide some key definitions of travelling subjects at the end of the twentieth-century. Under the influence of postmodernist theories, aesthetics and affects, and the shift in understanding of relations between cultures that has resulted from decolonisation and accelerated globalisation, contemporary travel writing demands recognition as a multi-vocal medium that effects a constant reconstitution of narrative subjectivity. To return again to Pratt, the height of imperial or colonial power did not necessitate the implied subjective control, which was, instead, of an imposed, fragile order, faced with a number of resistances, and is really a conglomerate strategy, incomplete in its application (Pratt 136). However, the historical claim to a "monadic" and

monological subjectivity in writings-of-displacement, fairly tenuous in retrospect, is even harder to claim when examining recent texts. Instead, such a claim must be seen as largely antithetical to contemporary writings. Through the texts and theory studied in this thesis, I demonstrate the development of subjective strategies that fragment the "monologic" claim with their contingent dependence upon increasingly unstable factors, which also demonstrate the current model of exchange with other subjectivities as exemplary. I argue that, as postmodern subjects, the author-travellers are prone to a doubled instability of identity due to the narrative displacement of the modern "self": an absence which is filled by substituting and shifting subjectivities instead of a discrete, unified consciousness. The flux affecting the position of the author is symptomatic of this displacement from a final, authorial control, and a suspicion that the subject written about is becoming the subject writing. Following the work of theorists such as Barthes, Derrida, Eakin, Jameson, Lyotard, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, notions of self and subject have widely come to be regarded as contingent, composite and unstable. As much as displacement narratives have been seemingly pressed to reveal autobiographical details in authorial experience and interpretation, postmodern aesthetics highlight a countering "unsettlement" typified in a travelling vision: the losing of the self to the transitional ambivalence implicit in "the magico-religious act of border-crossing" (Musgrove 38). Personal identity is thus doubly problematic in the case of a travelling subject, facing material "deterritorialistion" coupled with a crisis of ownership over one's narrative.

Alongside, extending and complicating this, I argued that author-travellers' subjectivities are also dependent on the contingency of affiliation with increasingly nebulous political and social institutions. The displaced subjects of the contemporary world may appear dispersed, yet there are still patterns of interconnection at work to

be determined. Despite writing from a position of "displacement", these authors are nonetheless always imagined in connection with or opposition to a "location". According to some theories of "postcoloniality", the idea of the subject is contingent upon an implicit identification of belonging, even in the case of apparent exclusion (for instance, "exile" can also function as a kind of belonging [Kaplan 28]). Alongside a critical evaluation of the "places" authors may depict, critics must also address the "place" of the author (Mishra and Hodge 31-2). This placement impinges upon any number of other methodologies, such as gender or class criticism, allowing for a fuller positioning of the author from background and affiliation. However, an awareness of a subject on the move goes further than this, emphasising the instability and change inherent in subjects' relationships to models of imperialism, nationalism, internationalism and postnationalism, and categorising practices of nomadism, exile, diaspora and migrancy, all of which impact upon the relationship between the travelling subject and subjective categorising. Authors, whether they desire this or not, cannot but be treated as subjects of and subject to larger political units, but the very process of attempting to categorise authors by these sorts of subjective affiliations both tests and refines the categories. In this way, border-crossing subjects are also border-defining subjects, and "individual" subjectivity is necessarily interconnected in globalised subjectivities.

By focussing on the flux and increasing heterogenisation of narrative exchange present in the "postcoloniality" of contemporary travel writing, I also addressed the persistent counter-forces tending towards cultural dominance, homogenisation and the practice of commodification as a mechanism that constrains cultural and social difference. To this end, I focus on the contending identities and affiliations of different subject-positions, labelled "travelling", "touristic", "nomadic", "exilic",

"diasporic" and "migrant", examining the various strategies of subjective affiliation at work in these definitions.

Touring Subjects.

In the first chapter, my small selection of contemporary writings on the Pacific represent works of literary tourism differentiated by methodology and attitude, and characterised by different strategic deployments of subject identification. However, the author-travellers or literary tourists studied share the trait of moving through a Pacific still heavily invested in the traces of imperialism. These Westerners, from professional backgrounds ranging amongst those specialising in travel-writing, sometime novelists and scientists, therefore also share many of the traits of Pratt's "anti-conquest" narrative in the subjective strategies, rehearsed and evolved into the neo-imperialist features of Western touristic writing, albeit to varying degrees. Nonetheless, the different subjective deployments of these authors illustrate the shift that conflates the writing subject with the subject of writing, a shift that reflects the movement towards postmodernist and postcolonial aesthetics in the recognition of diverse subjects.

In particular, I contended that Paul Theroux reveals himself to be the chief subject of his own text, fulfilling a desire for narcissistic subjectivity implicit within the authority of the modernist writer-traveller. By means of this attempt to limit the scope of his "inquiry" to a personal reflection, he also acts to maintain the symbolic subjective position of Western globalised dominance and superiority in the Pacific, even when critical of some aspects of the history of contact, and at the same time reviling the resulting "deviations" and hybridity in local cultures. This "imperial"

subjectivity manifests the desire to dominate on several levels at once in cultural contact. Alongside the will to overt political and "militaristic" domination, (hence Theroux's persistent fascination with death, violence and the cross-cultural iconography of weaponry), this monadic discursive practice presents itself as the "natural" embodiment of a superior culture, and is encapsulated in what Pratt calls the "seeing-man" implicated in the drive for "territorial surveillance, appropriation of resources, and territorial control" (39).

I suggest that the exoticist traits of Theroux's Pacific observation collectively display a racist and belittling treatment of Pacific peoples couched in a romanticised nostalgia for the high imperialist past. However, despite the overall effect, the subjective play within the narrative is more complicated, and harder to identify with "monadic", monological control. Throughout *The Happy Isles,* Theroux depicts his personalised, epiphanic consideration of elite, heroic travel as doomed by being too late. Shifting into a field of "contemporary" nostalgia, disgusted with the slippage of his subjects towards "impurity", Theroux's subjective strategy relies heavily on a modernist mythologizing of "exile", temporal and physical. Yet while attempting to distance himself from tourist mass culture, by means of an accentuation of differentiated experience and the distinction of educated "taste", the ambivalence of his register often reveals a fixation on the very "impurity" of taste castigated in trippers and spoiled locals.

Theroux experiences the Pacific in the wake of a number of earlier explorers, adventurers, and writers, and presents himself as a legitimate authority and spokesperson for this elite tradition, yet the monadic, filial desire for a pure discourse is undercut by his own, postmodern packaging. In particular, some of his own activities are very hard to distinguish from "day tripping": when he gawps at the

"abject" local savages and then insincerely (and prematurely) laments their passing, and when he passes off his own speech-acts of gossiping and stereotyping as others' and converts others' stories into his own. Similarly, he juxtaposes fantasising on sensationalist connections with cannibal taste against a tinny, backing soundtrack of Western opera playing on his walkman loud enough to drown out the local, indicating the superficiality of his observation. Just as the author's walkman is vulnerable to theft, his entire narrative is fraught with subjective contradictions in discursive traces, borrowings, thefts, accusations and counter-accusations that refuse to be integrated into a "monadic" whole. The implications of this duplicitous slippage in a text which largely seeks to render a neo-imperial (narrative) order on the Pacific must confirm that the ideological control of "taste" and artistic authority are fragile in the face of the multiple displacements of travel.

I also asserted that Oliver Sacks, writing a narrative that combines popular travelogue with popular science, shares this vulnerability to discursive slippage. The narrative ploys and subjective effects are somewhat different from those employed by Theroux, however. Constructing himself as a tourist with unusual scientific expertise, Sacks consequently appears in turns detached and chattily authorial in his narrative. This subjective strategy, of alternating an emphatically voiced anti-colonial perspective with a very empirically-informed, *scientific* dominance in the text, continues to promote the centrality of Western power and subordinates locals, even through denial. In conjunction with his overwhelming interest in clinical diagnosis and botany, Sacks' scientific humanism tends to dehumanise his subjects in a manner that echoes previous scientific methodology, acting in conjunction with more overt imperial subjectivity: what Pratt would identify with Enlightenment cataloguing and control of "nature". In this collusion between the "naturalising" and the

"decivilizing" of exotic subjects, Sacks mirrors Theroux's attempts at a totalising, symbolic order. Yet, in a different way, Sacks also demonstrates the subjective slippage out of the imperialising gaze. As well as tackling some of the explicit traits of imperial subjugation head-on, Sacks' more complicit scientific register drifts out of a cataloguing project and into parallel digressions through discussion of local customs and histories, reported observations, and an awareness of "nature" on the move, evolving, drifting, travelling and becoming "hybrid". Symptomatic of this is the varied treatment of one subject, the cycad, which is examined in relation to a number of differing discourse-traces, botanical, neurological, culture-historical, sexually, at first-hand and metaphorically. Despite (or perhaps because of) this extended cataloguing, the cycad remains an enigma, its value different depending upon contextualised histories of displacement, and misidentified from afar. Far from a clarifying and edifying narrative tendency, Sacks' book raises further awareness of the crises in identifying practices that travelling subjects imply.

Following from this, and covering another area of the Pacific, I discussed how Jonathan Raban goes even further towards a discursive practice that interrogates both postmodern and postcolonial subjects of "tourist" travel in the Pacific. With his highly inclusive sampling and exposition of parallel histories, and divergent perspectives, Raban extends his narrative towards a multicultural, multi-historical ideal. Using the refractive, reflective surface of the sea itself as a guiding metaphor, Raban constructs himself as a tourist-ethnographer and pastiche artist. For such a small boat (and book) Raban manages to carry a considerable load of differentiated narrative on his passage up the Northwest Coast to Alaska. Throughout this literary voyage this subjective "channelling" is quantitatively and qualitatively different from Sacks' and, particularly, Theroux's practices. Raban effectively provides himself as a

(still mediated) mouthpiece for a diversity of historical discourses that share the waterway, including contradictory Western traditions and Pacific's indigenous self-representations. As much as his mediation is signalled to the reader by his emphasising the quotation and interpretation of books he has read, and also by the highlighting of the personal experiences and "insights" that he narrates, the postmodern textuality of pastiche succeeds in mirroring the surface of his stated subject, the sea. Such a subjective treatment appears to fit a multiplicity of subjects, operating chiefly through fracture and heteroglossia, and provides a convincing challenge to the desire for monologic, imperial discourse. Indeed, a key part of Raban's project is to reinterpret imperial discourse as a collective, and often contradictory, set of narrative traits and projects, which seems to be wandering the globe in search of new territories to define itself against. However, the subjectivity of Raban, himself, remains a reflexive fixation of this meandering narrative. The sea is a mirror wherein Raban examines different versions of himself, role-playing the various histories of this *passage.*

In this way, I suggested that Raban not only reflects on himself in a way that places him alongside Theroux and Sacks, but also travels on a similarly performative aesthetic course that puts him in the "nomadic" path of Chatwin. These two authors both engage with the implications of an imperialist past through a postmodern fracture of narrative subjectivity, yet centre the question of their own subjectivity in their texts.

Nomads-are-Us: Selling *Aboriginality.*

In my second chapter, I examined Bruce Chatwin's literary journey to Australia alongside the theoretical contexts of Deleuzian notions of nomadology and contemporary debates over the role and forms of ethnography in cultural exchange. *The Songlines* is a rambling, postmodern patchwork of styles displaying a desire for travel itself, a wanderlust that revels in solitary freedoms experienced on the road. Chatwin fashions himself by sampling a medley of more traditionally nomadic societies, most notably Australian Aboriginal, and seems to some extent to be engaged in a *performance* of anti-institutional rhetoric that warrants comparison with the nomadology of Deleuze and Guattari.

Like Raban, Chatwin attempts to "channel" the discourse of others, wandering through a very diverse field of subjects, anthropological, historical, mythological, personal, poetic and artistic. However, when his practices and assumptions are examined against other recent interpretations of Australian "nomadism", Chatwin's subjective strategies can be seen to reflect some of the narcissistic textuality of Theroux, and reveal traits of a continuing, neo-imperialist "anti-conquest" narrative. As Muecke sees it, nomads inspire and are, potentially, collaborators in an internationalised exchange of art and narrative (*Reading the Country*). Chatwin, however, uses Aboriginal knowledge to displace himself into a "Golden Age" fantasy while still clinging to the effete mannerisms of a neo-imperial collecting and cataloguing subject. Although postmodernist in his disjunctive style and postures, his obsessive note-taking bears witness to a continuing tradition of modernity's cataloguing and "controlling" practices. Following the indications he makes towards universality, expressed in a new, nomadic global identity, he subjects himself to an idiosyncratic identikit reconstruction of classical and biblical quotation, dabbling in

various scientific and scholarly fields. Although the self-reflexive style of narration provides a considerably rich irony to his subjects, Chatwin's emulative and formative portrait of "primitives" culturally decentres them from the narrative.

Chatwin's attitude and understanding of "natives" may appear to be far more positive and sympathetic than Theroux's disgust with "ruined" Pacific cultures, but his New Age, postmodernist blend of expertise reperforms Sacks' commodifying subjectivity (recreating versions of empirical "case-study"), and the celebration of the "beautiful" Aboriginal death at the end of the book has shiftiness that complicates the narrator's place in the event.

Likewise, his apparent claim to a "deep" understanding of Aboriginal culture cannot be justified after such a short stay (even if Chatwin claims a long symbolic association from afar), and many of his subjective manoeuvres conceal more than they reveal. This elusiveness is an intrinsic attraction of maintaining a nomadic subjectivity: it is harder to hit a moving target. Nonetheless, Chatwin's nomadology is a one that challenges claims to stability of the modern nation-state, and complicates notions of continuingly influential modes of imperialism. His meandering examination of subjects partly effects a decentring of both the areas of focus and his own subjective control, to the point where he acts as a khaki-clad "Roland Barthes", re-uttering "the Death of the Author" in the Outback. However, this *stance* of "deserted" authorship in the text needs to be balanced against an awareness of the contradictions a decentred egocentric practice displays, and Chatwin's apparent availability to a diverse and international readership is dependent on the extra-textual resonance of his persona easily traced within his written work. The songs central to the title, and, supposedly, the text, are appropriated and changed to a self-referential significance.

Diasporic Bricolage.

My third chapter dealt with a different, but comparable site of displacement: the situation of a marginalized "nation" that requires recentring, and an "out of place" subject able to identify with interstitial relationships. Edward Said, a representative of nation-state affiliations still residual within an increasingly attenuated "globalisation" of culture, challenges the hegemony of Western representation and celebrates the vibrantly changeable Palestinian culture with his own travelling theoretical practice, reading the predicament of his people from a position of exile into the community of diaspora. The sorts of differences operating in the texts of Said that I examine are representative of some of the variations between the inside and outside of various locations, places and societies, separated by history and space, which can nonetheless be resolved by an imaginative act of will. The associations of "insider" and "outsider" subject status might be seem to strain any offer of narrative authenticity and validity, yet Said skilfully argues the case for intermediary displacements of interpretation and projection. The traveller as author necessitates a liminal position, negotiating an effect of closeness and veracity in proximity to the observed location, while also maintaining the distance that allows for the act of observation to be itself observed. This distance is related in contextual comparisons, cultural and ideological relativism, constructing the traveller and author as a composite figure of mediation who provides a basis for the conjunctive relationship of "insider" and "outsider" status in the construction of readership, similarly to the acts of visual mediation at work in Said's texts.

Within this structure, I argue that Said delimits extended mechanisms of imperialism against a conceptual nationhood that is, itself, global in both its

implications and manifestations; for Said, belonging to the group, *Palestinian*, recognises a "dispersed" or exiled nation presented in the photographic, literary and anecdotal traces of Palestinians living abroad. Such a globalised context models itself on scale and "common" features that work against homogeneity, which rubs against a history of Western speculation. That this multiple awareness of this residual, nationalist subject offers a discomforting alternative in the international consciousness, is due to a high (and often negative) profile in the international media; Western journalists and politicians often stigmatise Palestinian nationalism, and "nationalism" in general, by associating it with uncompromising violence, while conveniently labelling other "struggles" as "liberating." When Said resolves the multiplicity of his exiled status into a challenge to the limitations of increasingly institutionalised social codes (especially representations in the Western media), he privileges a hybrid, multifaceted yet coalescent identity that may yet influence international public opinion on the issue of Palestine.

Migrant Imaginaries

The last chapter continued and extended the focus on multiple narrative displacements, using the example of migrant authors Salman Rushdie and Michael Ondaatje to further question the imperial subjective assumption and consumptions of the "margins." Within this chapter, I argued that the social and temporal environment of shifting people and ideas makes the conception of "home" and the hierarchy of belonging particularly problematic. Home and habitation may seem oppositional to the practices of travel, yet in many traditional literary types of movement, the awareness of a base either available to return to, or denied, expresses a desire for domestic life and a metropolitan centre of culture that defines and delimits the scope

of displacement. By examining migrant authors, who themselves celebrate and concern themselves with migrant identity, I showed that the assumption of "domestic" stability is based on an economics of hidden borrowing. Ondaatje's revision of Canadian history elucidates the role of imported labour and suppressed culture in the building of the hosts' homes. Migrant labour ironically helps in the creation of a national infrastructure that is keen on cultural exclusion.

I drew on Rushdie's *the Satanic Verses* to reveal and critique a similar trait in the continuing imperial nostalgia of Britain for its greatest former exploited asset, a nostalgia assisted by racist policies and practices inflicted upon migrants following the route of extracted wealth. The uncertainty institutionally encouraged in the figure of the migrant is also reinforced by the secondary threat of co-optation present in the reproduction and circulation of these works of dissent. The potential for reconsumption as exoticist colour in a globalised, Western market is a threat faced squarely by Ondaatje through his return to Sri Lanka. At the same time as celebrating his familial, suitably bastardised past, Ondaatje finds his intermediary, residual identity as an outsider of several decades disturbing. However, the duality of cultural markers of which he makes the reader aware, becomes a positive site of slippage. As a point of access for both the international reader and a narrative of dissent, Ondaatje's own international subjectivity is usefully performative of contending models of globalisation, resisting an easy exoticist assimilation into consumer culture.

Subjects "in the World": Globalising Tendencies

Throughout the thesis, I have asserted the differentiated and uneven travel experiences and representations available to different groups and individuals. The

preceding breakdown of chapters articulates how I have looked at particular territories, and *subjects*, of interest. An assessment of the interplay of subjectivities based on the relationship of regions emphasizes the danger of overly generalized or totalising theoretical approaches. Similarly, the ranging of contemporary cultural producers, with their diversity of travel practices and modes of representation, engages with and complicates the concepts of "insider" and "outsider" status, the notion of home, the relationship between gender, class and travel, (and consequential shifts in travelling "taste" and "affect"). I have stressed some of the notable *differences* in intention, methodology, content and impact between these subjects. However, it also needs to be emphasized that the *particularity* of experience and form reflect a relationship of movements and meetings, people and ideology that is global in scope. As such, the conditions of a globalised context for such textual production (and consumption) need to be addressed further.

Several models of "globalisation" co-exist at present, in an uneasy relationship of contradiction, mutual support and denial. Perhaps the most "popularly" understood (and also the most unpopular, to many), the global market overshadows and consumes several other models due to its perceived bulk and "novel" power. However, the globalisation of transnational capitalism, for all of what some see as the propaganda of the "free market", and "liberal" concerns, can also be explained as just a new and more extensive manifestation of imperial relations. When examined against the differentiated displacements of subjects found throughout this study, the conception of globalisation is demonstrably not one of profound homogeneity. Concentrating on contemporary features of displacement narratives reveals several major perceptions of globalisation, which coexist in an uneasy (and somewhat artificial) juxtaposition and admixture. Critical figures from diverse backgrounds (by social class, gender, ethnic,

professional and political affiliation) are useful in isolating and interpreting the significance of these different models. The neo-imperial "travel" of global capitalism is a forceful version of globalisation, and one that generates a heavy proportion of debate over the implications of its spread. As a continuation and sophistication of European politico-economic imperial expansion, this version of globalisation is characterised by corporations' and investors' recognition of border crossing as a financially beneficial enterprise. Despite the easy flow of money and products between different regions, though, the "successes" of this version of globalisation depend upon continuing spatial differentiations. Transnational capitalism flourishes by maintaining the contradictions of a "free market" alongside disparate conditions that allow a high profitability in exchange.

The cultural correlative of transnational capitalism, the culture-ideology that exists hand-in-hand with economic consumerism, exhibits many similar contradictions, and the very conditions that are ripe for multinationals' expansion also provide a space for a multicultural globalism of dissent and solidarity. Both within the "West" and elsewhere, patterns of resistance to transnational economics and cultural imperialism rally around both national and regional distinctiveness, and call for a combined international, oppositional stance. In this thesis, I have been particularly concerned with examining the current theory and practice of transmigration and transnational identity, mediations that, I contend, are able to make limited challenges to the cultural hegemony. Instead of a dichotomist relationship between local and the multi-national that stresses the division of the world into uneven economic zones, the notion of post-national transmigration emphasises cultural exchange as the exemplary feature of displaced subjects. The dialogue between these two social models has been interrogated in relation to a number of cultural texts demonstrating the differentiated

positions of various travel practices. In this way, I have shown that some central aspects of literary tourism, especially as practised by nostalgic writers like Theroux, both celebrate and castigate different models of globalisation, recreating new strains of "anti-conquest narrative" to function within a neo-imperial context. In contrast, the more "multiculturally" aligned texts and modes of displaced subjectivity examined in this study present another version of globalisation seemingly at odds with the more negatively defined commercial imperialism. However, the distinctions between such models cannot be maintained with such artificial clarity, as different aspects of commercial and cultural globalisms meet and combine in multiply realised contact zones. Literary production itself, with its multiple input, functions and consumption, acts as a point of contact between wildly different claims.

The apparatus of global capitalism profits from and supports the publishing of "travel" narrative for the purpose of further economic and cultural capital accumulation. The influence of these priorities can be seen in the publication of "marketable" authors. The inclusion of "oppositional" political writers like Rushdie into the "canon" may be read to be a cynical expansion into "new" markets and a demographic of monied left-wing readers. Yet, as Appadurai states, the implications of a readership also able to travel (both physically and critically) unsettles the authority of this marketing, as much as it unsettles any monological reading of texts (226). The possibility of "subversive micro narratives" undermining the key conceptual positions taken by the author challenges the omnipotence of the mediating narrative position. What is more usually recognised as a wider, critical readership exists beyond the consensus imagined earlier in the twentieth-century, reperforming the sustaining movement between insider and outsider positions. Readers of travel texts must find themselves echoing authors' Deleuzian acts of "becoming", aware that

the texts and their subjective narration reflect the acts of displacement being narrated. The very terms used to describe types of travel invite attention to the attributes of insider and outsider knowledge. Aspects of gender, class, and nationality combine with identification of subjects at "home" and abroad to produce differentiated "depths" of perspective.

Issues of "global" postmodernity are also challenged by factors beyond the scope of nation boundaries. While the nation-state is still a political and economic factor determining who can cross borders and who cannot, and in what manner such a crossing manifests itself, this is further complicated or exempted by class and gender distinctions. Within the fundamental differences between types of movement (tourism, exile, labour migration, privileged migratory lifestyles) gender and class play particularly instructive and restrictive roles. In this way it is possible to see that the male literary "tourist" featured in the first chapter, is defined against the local, in terms of class and gender. Locals feature as feminised (re)visions of home left behind (especially Theroux and Raban) equating the exotic with erotic. Sex is the subjective difference between travelling and dwelling, in this instance, with Raban attesting to the male domain of navigating by right of "balls".

The issue of gender further compounds class and nationality distinctions, which result in the comparative freedom of the narrators' travel compared to that of the locals. When male narrators do not ignore the travel practices of female "locals", their types of journeys and knowledge are often discriminated against. Feminist figures like Adrienne Rich may treat their own travel practices as a way of aligning themselves towards an international solidarity based on gender, but the histories of travel in her own country represented by women of colour is largely ignored by her affiliation with other, relatively privileged feminists (Kaplan 166). This demonstrates

that even travelling practices based on gender affirmation are prone to selective biases in terms of the class or colour of traveller focussed on, and that the travel experience of the author often takes priority over others'.

In a similar way, in Chatwin's case, nomadology reveals itself to be a strangely decontextualised, gendered activity, embodied in a kind of wish fulfilment rather than relativistic exchange. Chatwin's "closeted" status as a male author, is matched by a largely homosocial narrative terrain closeted away from a fuller rendering of Aboriginal society (bearing comparison to Dianne Bell's rendition of feminine Australian Aboriginal knowledge). Whereas both Said and Ondaatje volubly venerate female figures as the fount of their cultural identity, in practice, the social boundaries that they more closely explore are ones of nationality, ethnicity and class. In these narratives it may be asserted that however anti-hegemonic the intent, the hidden, domesticated and feminine *home* is as equally repressed by the articulation of male displacement that is privileged. As stated in the introduction, the apparent bias of treatment, selecting male authors for analysis, reflects a bias in the production of travel texts. It should be clear that I feel travel writing is not always the homosocial field it often may be purported to be: the "masculinist" aspects of production, alongside other key issues such as assumptions of class, ethnicity and taste, actually provide room for a critique of subject formation. While such a study as this must recognise its own limitations, and can only indicate that such implications and connections require further exploration, I have emphasized the interconnectedness of issues of cultural placement.

The key "types" of travel text examined in this study move towards a commentary on the significance of displaced subjects in contemporary ideology. My historicized

sample of travel writing has therefore drawn attention to the development of archetypal narrative templates to discuss their impact on the contemporary writings that exist in their wake. The critical interpretations of displacement are crucial to understanding the current reassessments of place and history in a world that increasingly seems populated by travellers, and fights over the definition of globalised ideologies. As much as they can be discussed as a group, and regarded as sharing characteristics in common, the negotiation of subjectivity exists as a key defining concern within contemporary narratives of displacement.

Even where it displays a Fussell-like yearning for the "lost", heroic author-positions of the past, an awareness of theory complicates the subjectivity of an elite, nostalgic contemporary travel-writing position. The multiple imprint of a heteroglossic present tends to take the place of the masculine, bourgeois, Caucasian romantic or modernist traveller, and epiphanic narratives of self-discovery and (figurative) geographic subjugation. Reviewing the current literature of displacement, it is as though the solitary sole that intruded into Robinson Crusoe's narrative (for the purpose of becoming the natural servant to the Western colonist's fantasy) has proliferated to the point of trampling over the idea of the solitary author-position.

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